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**The Conscience of the Community: The Character and
Development of Clerical Complaint in Early Modern
England**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in History

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AgHR</i>	<i>Agricultural History Review</i>
<i>AHEW, IV</i>	J. Thirks (ed.), <i>The Agrarian History of England and Wales Vol. 4, 1500-1640</i> (London, 1967)
<i>Alumni Cantab</i>	J.A. Venn, <i>Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of all Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, Part I: From the Earliest Times to 1751</i> (4 vols., Cambridge, 1922-27)
<i>Alumni Oxon</i>	J. Foster, <i>Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1500-1714 . . . Being the Matriculation Register</i> (4 vols., Oxford, 1891-92)
<i>APC</i>	J.R. Dasent (ed.), <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> (46 vols., London, 1890-1964)
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>BL</i>	British Library, London
<i>Bodl.</i>	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>Bridges</i>	J. Bridges, <i>The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire. Compiled from the Manuscript Collections of the Late Learned Antiquary J. Bridges, Esq., by the Rev. Peter Whalley</i> (2 vols., Oxford, 1762-91)
<i>Compton Census</i>	A. Whiteman (ed.), <i>The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition</i> (Records of Social and Economic History new ser. 10, Oxford, 1986)
<i>CSPD</i>	R. Lemon <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Mary, Elizabeth, James I, Charles I</i> (35 vols., London, 1856-97)
<i>DNB</i>	L. Stephens and S. Lee (eds.), <i>The Dictionary of National Biography</i> , (63 vols., London, 1885-1900)
<i>DRO</i>	Devon Record Office, Exeter
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>

<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
More, <i>Utopia</i>	<i>The complete works of St. Thomas More. Vol.4, Utopia</i> , ed. E. Surtz and J.H.Hexter. (New Haven and London, 1965)
NCC	Norwich Consistory Court
Norf.RO	Norfolk Record Office, Norwich
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton
NRS	Northamptonshire Record Society
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 2 nd edn. (20 vols., Oxford, 1989)
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PRO	Public Record Office
<i>PSIA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology</i>
SGB	Suffolk Green Books
SROB	West Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds
<i>STC</i>	A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640</i> , 2 nd edn., revised and enlarged by W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson, and K.F. Panzer (3 vols., London, 1976-91)
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VCH Northants</i>	W. Ryland, D. Adkins R.M. Serjeantson and L.F. Salzman (eds.), <i>The Victoria History of the County of Northampton</i> (5 vols., London, 1902-2000)
<i>VCH Suffolk</i>	W. Page (ed.), <i>The Victoria History of the County of Suffolk</i> (2 vols., London 1906-11)
Walker, <i>Sufferings</i>	John Walker, <i>An attempt towards recovering an account of the numbers and sufferings of the clergy</i>

*of the Church of England . . . who were
sequester'd, harrass'd, &c. in the late times of the
Grand Rebellion (1714)*

WCSL

West Country Studies Library, Exeter

White, *Devonshire*

W. White, *White's Devon: A Reprint of 'History, Gazetteer and Directory of Devonshire'* (Newton Abbot, 1968)

White, *Suffolk*

W. White, *White's 1844 Suffolk: A Reprint of the 1833 'History, Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk'* (Newton Abbot, 1970)

Wing

D. Wing, *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America and of English Books Printed in other Countries 1641-1700*, 2nd edn., revised and enlarged by the Index Committee of the Modern Language Association of America (3 vols., New York, 1972-88)

WSRO

Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office

Note for the Reader

All quotations from contemporary manuscript and printed works retain original punctuation, capitalisation, spelling and italicisation, except quotations from dedications and prefaces, where normal text has been substituted for italics. The use of i and j, u and v, has been modernised. Greek letters have been transliterated. In citations from both manuscript and printed sources, standard abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded. Signature numbers have been cited in arabic numerals throughout. Most long titles have been curtailed, but the date and place of a sermon's delivery have been included in these abbreviated titles, where relevant. In the text of the thesis itself, dates are calculated with the year reckoned to begin on 1 January. Except where indicated, biblical references are to the Authorised Version of 1611.

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Finally, my greatest debt is to Luke, who has experienced this thesis in all its stages, and whose understanding, love and faith have never wavered.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis considers the character and development of clerical social criticism in England between c.1540 and c.1640. It draws principally on a number of sermons and treatises that offered critiques of the prevailing structures of wealth and power or exhortations to the fulfilment of charitable obligations. The paradigm through which these texts were constructed was that of 'complaint', a genre that was particularly vibrant in medieval discourse and in the sermons and 'commonwealth' tracts of the 1540s. It will be argued that rather than eschewing this tradition, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century preachers appropriated and refashioned its structures, themes and authorial positioning in response to far reaching economic, social and religious change.

Particular aspects of socio-economic change, and of their effects on the clergy in particular, are examined in the introduction. Among the themes that are particularly germane to this thesis are the history of the enclosure movement; increasing commercialisation; and changing attitudes towards the poor. The first chapter assembles a number of printed texts in order to re-examine the trajectory of clerical complaint literature in the context of these developments. The second chapter considers the potential for social and political criticism in sermons preached at the county assizes, a sub-genre of 'occasional' sermons that until recently has received little attention from literary scholars or historians. The latter half of the thesis offers three case studies of selected sermons by three different authors. The intention of these chapters is primarily to examine the interaction between a text and its particular local context, although attention is also paid to broader social, political and discursive developments that help shed light on the historical meaning of these sermons.

It is thus hoped that this study will contribute particularly to the ongoing interdisciplinary work of 'contextualising' the early modern English sermon and of reconstructing the role and status of the parish minister. Rather than a 'voice in the wilderness', it is concluded, the clerical moralist was an active agent in the discursive interpretation of economic change, and in the fashioning and communication of the reputation of powerful individuals.

Introduction

Clerical Complaint in Context

In Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, the Latin American bishops' conference declared its adherence to a 'clear and prophetic option expressing preference for, and solidarity with, the poor'.¹ The parishes of seventeenth-century England are somewhat distant from the depressed regions of twentieth-century Latin America, but the ministers of the former nevertheless frequently adopted the posture of 'poor man's advocate' in their treatises on charity or commentaries on dearth and oppression.² The other side of this authorial positioning was, of course, a willingness to attack the behaviour of the rich and powerful. '[E]nemies to the Ministrie of the Gospel', one contemporary claimed, resented this 'overbold checking and (as they tearme it) domineering over their betters'.³ This thesis considers the interaction and precariousness of these authorial positions through two inter-related lines of enquiry. The first traces a trajectory of clerical social criticism in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, paying attention to its ambiguities, appropriations and refashioning in specific contexts. The second attempts to discover the motivations and shared interpretative mechanisms that could transform the pulpit into a 'cockpit of contention'.⁴

In order to pursue these themes, the following chapters assemble a range of printed sermons and treatises, in which clergymen offered critiques of

¹ L. Boff and C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. P. Burns (Tunbridge Wells, 1987), pp.43-44.

² Cf. William Whately, *The poore man s advocate, or, A treatise of liberality to the needy* (1637).

³ Anon., *Three bloodie murders* (1613), sig.A2^r ('To the Reader').

⁴ S.R. Gardiner (ed.), *Reports of the Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission* (Camden Society new ser. 39, London, 1886), p.213.

prevailing structures of wealth and power, or exhorted men to fulfil their charitable obligations. In their preoccupations, structures and authorial positioning, these texts were heirs to the medieval tradition of social criticism known as the genre of 'complaint'. The surviving printed sermon material is heavily biased towards 'occasional' orations, such as those preached at the metropolitan pulpit at Paul's Cross; at the royal court; or prior to the county assizes. There are also numerous published sermons that were preached as part of popular combination lectures in market towns. Consequently, this thesis is particularly concerned with the ways in which sermons defined and negotiated the relationship between the preacher and a congregation that included learned, powerful and self-consciously godly auditors. A sustained attempt is also made, however, to position both sermons and treatises with reference to a much wider literature of moralistic concern, including the illicit genres of libel and satire and the public pronouncements of the monarch. As well as locating these texts in their discursive milieu, a principal aim of the thesis is to situate sermons in the context not only of cultural and ecclesiological, but also of social and economic change.

This introduction explores the experience of, and the tensions generated by, a period of economic and social transition, both in society in general and amongst the clergy in particular. Cumulatively, the first two sections offer a summary of historiographical and contemporary perspectives on some of the most significant manifestations of change. The chronological focus of both this survey and the thesis as a whole is the century between c.1540 and c.1640, with particular reference to the early Stuart era.⁵ The period as a whole was one of

creative tension in both the economic and the religious spheres. As prices and population rose, the obligations of the Christian in English social life were questioned and redefined. The clergy were not only directly affected by these changes, and in particular by the redistribution of income which they entailed, but also, as part of the process of reformation, were redefining their relationship with their flocks and their place in local society. The promotion of a single confessional identity, meanwhile, was crucial to the legitimation of the state. Clerics from across the broad spectrum of conformity were therefore necessarily embroiled in the cultural process of state formation. The third section of this introduction considers the effects of this on the potential for, and purpose of, social and political criticism in occasional preaching. It offers both a synopsis of the methodological advances that have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the cultural and political importance of sermons, and an initial prospectus for the further development of these approaches.

I

THE EXPERIENCE AND INTERPRETATION OF ECONOMIC CHANGE

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, economic life in England experienced a period of ‘gradual but fundamental transition’.⁶ These

⁵ The first section pushes the earlier parameter back to 1500, primarily in order to encompass the early sixteenth-century enclosure movement.

⁶ K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven and London, 2000), p.23. Much of the following section draws on this important work, which both synthesises and develops the investigations of earlier social and economic historians into all aspects of economic life in this period. Among the most important contributions to our understanding of demographic and price trends in the period are E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (1981); E.H. Phelps-Brown and S.V. Hopkins, ‘Seven Centuries of the Price of Consumables Compared with Builders’ Wage-Rates’, in E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), *Essays in Economic History*, (2 vols., London, 1962), II, pp.168-78; P. Bowden, ‘Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents’ and ‘Statistical Appendix’, in *AHEW*, IV, pp.593-695, 814-70.

years witnessed the emergence of a capitalist market economy with increased opportunities for investment, enterprise and the exchange of labour as a commodity. This intensification of the role of market relationships in the social fabric naturally had destabilising effects on traditional patterns of interaction and obligation, which proved traumatic both to the immediate victims of economic change and to many contemporary moralists. The causes and symptoms of change that have been painstakingly analysed by economic and social historians were also recognised by contemporaries. In his *Description of England* (1577), William Harrison alluded to population expansion; to the growth of internal trade; to the attempts by landlords to 'improve' their estates; and to the rise of commercial farming among more prosperous tenants. He also registered an increasing differentiation between those experiencing a rise in domestic living standards and those engaged in a struggle for subsistence.⁷

The rise in the English population from around 2.4 million in the early 1520s to 5.3 million in 1651 represented an extraordinary period of demographic expansion. The rate of growth in the 1570s and 1580s – around 1.1 per cent a year – was particularly astounding. This demographic arc is a crucial explanatory factor in the unprecedented levels of inflation experienced during this period. The price of the hypothetical 'basket of consumables' rose threefold between the beginning of the sixteenth century and the 1570s. Average wheat prices almost doubled between the 1570s and the 1630s, and this long-term trend was exacerbated by harvest failures such as those of 1622-23 and 1629-31. At the same time, real wages had fallen dramatically, whilst the cloth industry on which many labourers depended was acutely sensitive to fluctuations in demand. Some

⁷ Cited in Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.3.

contemporaries sought 'monetarist' explanations for the dramatic rise in prices but many laid the blame squarely at the feet of avaricious individuals: the 'regrator' and 'engrosser' of corn or the 'encloser' who withdrew land from tillage. These words have little currency in the twenty-first century but in Tudor and Stuart England they acted as powerful vehicles for a moralised explanation of change.

The following discussion of economic change is of course far from comprehensive. It focuses instead on three areas that are both germane as signifiers of wider economic perspectives and are either alluded to, or confronted directly by, the clergy whose attitudes are analysed in the following chapters. These areas are: developments in the use of land and terms of tenancy, with particular reference to the enclosure movement; the expansion of commerce and credit; and responses to the growing problem of poverty.

I.i. Agrarian Change

The history of enclosure in the period c.1500 to 1640 may be divided into three broad phases of development, each of which elicited contemporary comment and government action.⁸ An early period of activity from the late fifteenth century to the early 1520s was followed by a period of relative stability until a new wave of enclosures towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁹ The most famous critique of

⁸ For a survey of the legislation enacted between 1488 and 1640 and of 'public opinion' at this time see J. Thirsk, 'Enclosure and Engrossing' in *AHEW*, IV, pp.211, 213-39.

⁹ Although this time-scale is broadly accepted, the difficulty of determining the exact acreage of land enclosed in this period has led to various interpretations of the chronology and intensity of English enclosure between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. For the principal contributions to this debate see I.S. Leadam, *The Domesday of Enclosures 1517-18*, (2 vols., Royal Historical Society, London, 1887); M.W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England* (London, 1954); J.D. Gould, 'Mr Beresford and the Lost Villages: A Comment', *AgHR* 3 (1955), 107-13; E.F. Gay, 'The Midland Revolt and the Inquisitions of Depopulation of 1607', *TRHS* new ser. 18 (1905), 195-244; E. Kerridge, 'The Returns of the Inquisitions of Depopulation', *EHR* 70:275 (April

the early movement is provided in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). Here the process of depopulation is vividly – if not entirely accurately – reconstructed, through such imagery as that of sheep which 'begin now, according to report, to be so greedy and wild that they devour human beings themselves and devastate and depopulate fields, houses, and towns'.¹⁰ In More's analysis – voiced through his character of Hythlodæus – the profiteering of covetous landlords and their 'oligopoly' of the wool market were merely symptomatic of a widespread 'conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth'. This moralised and emotive description of the effects of enclosure was to have an enduring influence on the iconography and tone of anti-enclosure literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹¹ The year after *Utopia*'s publication saw the advent of Thomas Wolsey's enclosure commissions, which publicised more widely the illegality of enclosures that destroyed houses of husbandry and converted tillage to pasture.¹² Although the commission was prompted by reported rioting in Hampshire, there was in fact

1955), 212-28; J.E. Martin, 'Enclosure and the Inquisitions of 1607: An Examination of Dr Kerridge's Article 'The Returns of the Inquisitions of Depopulation'', *AgHR* 30 (1982), 41-48; I. Blanchard, 'Population Change, Enclosure and the Early Tudor Economy', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 23:4 (1970), 427-45; J.R. Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 36:4 (1983), 491-92.

¹⁰ More, *Utopia*, pp.65-67. For evidence that many villages where enclosure took place were already 'depopulated' by demographic stagnation in the later middle ages see Beresford, *Lost Villages of England*, pp.116-17, 210, 410; Leadam, *Domesday of Enclosures*, I, pp.293-94, 306, 422.

¹¹ More, *Utopia*, pp.240-41. For More's influence from the mid-sixteenth century see below, *passim*. For the resonance of his criticism in contemporaneous work, especially that of Thomas Starkey, see N. Wood, *Foundations of Political Economy: Some Early Tudor Views on State and Society* (Berkeley, 1994), pp.138-44.

¹² P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp.14-15; J.J. Scarisbrick, 'Cardinal Wolsey and the Common weal' in E. W. Ives, R.J. Knecht and J.J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England: Essays Presented to S.T. Bindoff* (London, 1978), pp.45-67.

little popular opposition to enclosure at this time of relative demographic stability.¹³

Comparatively little enclosure took place between the 1520s and the 1570s, and where agrarian reorganisation did occur, it commonly took the form of the taking in and enclosing of wastes rather than the conversion of land to pasture.¹⁴ Nevertheless, changed demographic circumstances in the second quarter of the sixteenth century encouraged a reinterpretation of the physical landscape as a site of unbridled greed, which threatened to sap the strength of the kingdom by keeping corn prices high and leaving the ploughman without maintenance. Contemporaries began to identify once again the root cause of the 'decaye of England' in its 'great multitude of shepe'.¹⁵ This grievance was elaborated, moreover, into a broader critique of the seigneurial policies – the raising of rents and fines and beginnings of the conversion of copyhold to leasehold – adopted as landlords countered the pressures of inflation. The failure to turn expropriated monastic lands to the common good was also considered a shameful scar on the nation's conscience. This was particularly true for the so-called 'commonwealthsmen', whose visions of social and religious reform were inextricably linked. These Edwardian preachers and pamphleteers were nevertheless convinced of the crown's ability to realise their social ideal. Between 1547 and 1549, at least, their hopes were confirmed by the willingness of Somerset's regime to adopt the rhetoric and priorities of the anti-enclosure

¹³ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.14n. Anti-enclosure protests at this time were largely confined to the towns, where rich burgesses were enclosing previously common land (see R.H. Tawney and E. Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents* (3 vols., London, 1924), III, pp.14, 17-18).

¹⁴ P. Bowden, 'Movements in Wool Prices 1490-1610', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research* 4:2 (September 1952), 122-23; Wordie, 'Chronology of English Enclosure', 491-95. According to Wordie, only around 3 per cent of the country's cultivatable land was enclosed over the course of the sixteenth century.

¹⁵ Tawney and Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents*, III, p.51.

movement, culminating in the enclosure commissions of 1548-49. The commonplace narrative of agrarian change in these years emphasised the erosion of status for the English yeoman as the balance of power shifted in favour of the landlord. This was equally true for the preacher at court as for the participants in the 'commotion time' in the summer of 1549, which was to produce demands from rebel groups across the country, as well as the famous Mousehold manifesto from Robert Kett and his followers in Norfolk.¹⁶ As Keith Wrightson has convincingly suggested, however, this only tells half the story. Demographic growth and price inflation initially expanded the opportunities for agricultural producers – both yeomen and husbandmen – at the expense of market-dependent consumers. The cash incomes required for increased rents could stimulate 'a rearticulation of household economies towards an enhanced commercial involvement'.¹⁷

From the 1580s, however, the position of the husbandman was subject to increasing pressure by the acceleration in the upward movement of rents and by the further extension of leasehold by manorial lords.¹⁸ Whilst larger yeomen farmers consolidated their position and continued to expand the scale of their farming, many husbandmen were impoverished by the actions of their landlord or richer neighbours. The 'engrossing' of farms into larger units facilitated the diversification in the experience of manorial tenants and was often the prelude to a multilateral enclosure 'agreement'. This process characterised much of the

¹⁶ For evidence of the national character of the 1549 rebellions see M. Jones, 'Commotion Time': the English Risings of 1549' (University of Warwick Ph.D. Thesis, 2003). For letters exchanged between the government and rebel groups see E. Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions Revisited', *EHR* 114:454 (February 1999), 34-63. The full text of the Mousehold manifesto, or 'Kett's demands being in rebellion' is printed in A.J. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (London, 1997), pp.142-44.

¹⁷ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp.138-40. For evidence of local farmers responding to increased demand from populous towns see Thirsk, 'Enclosure and Engrossing', p.211.

¹⁸ Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', pp.690-91.

agrarian reorganisation carried out between the 1580s and the 1650s but was by no means always as consensual as the name suggests.¹⁹ The enclosure of a manor by a single lord, moreover, still characterised some of the more dramatic agrarian reorganisation in the Midland counties.²⁰ The disastrous harvests of the later 1590s and the aborted Oxfordshire rising of 1596 brought forth renewed opposition to this new wave of enclosure, culminating in the anti-enclosure statutes of 1597.²¹ Despite Francis Bacon's impassioned attack on enclosure and Robert Cecil's unequivocal assertion that 'whosoever doth not maintain the Plough, destroys this Kingdom', however, an alternative conception of the national interest was being formulated and propagated with increasing confidence. This vision subordinated the rhetoric of mutual responsibility to that of 'liberty' and 'discretion' and maintained that the gentleman's desire for profit was entirely compatible with the poor man's desire for 'habitation'. It influenced the measured response among some commentators to the Midland Rising of 1607, as well as the relaxation of the legislation against conversion of tillage in 1618 and its partial repeal in 1624. This legislation facilitated the crown's reorganisation of its own estates. Like many landlords at this time, it had

¹⁹ E.M. Leonard, 'The Inclosure of Common Fields in the Seventeenth Century', *TRHS* new ser. 19 (1905), 108-15; M. Beresford, 'Habitation Versus Improvement: The Debate on Enclosure by Agreement', in F.J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England in Honour of R.H. Tawney* (Cambridge, 1961), pp.40-69; Thirsk, 'Enclosure and Engrossing', pp.202-03; J. Thirsk, 'Changing Attitudes to Enclosure in the Seventeenth Century', in *The Festschrift for Professor Ju-Hwan Oh on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Taegu [Korea], 1991), p.525; R.B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1988), pp.108-31; S. Hindle, 'Persuasion and Protest in the Caddington Common Enclosure Dispute, 1635-39', *P&P* 158 (February 1998), 37-78, esp. 41.

²⁰ W. E. Tate, 'Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 1:2 (1949), 25-26; M.E. Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families 1560-1640* (NRS 19, Oxford, 1956), pp.72-74; L.A. Parker, 'The Agrarian Revolution at Cotesbach, 1501-1612', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* 24 (1948), 41-76; J.E. Martin, *Feudalism to Capitalism: Peasant and Landlord in English Agrarian Development* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp.180-91.

²¹ Thirsk, 'Attitudes to Enclosure', p.520; Thirsk, 'Enclosure and Engrossing', pp.228-32; J. Walter, 'A 'Rising of the People'? The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596', *P&P* 107 (May 1985), 90-143.

employed surveyors to assess the profitability of these lands and, having identified the potential benefits of enclosure, looked to a developing discourse to vindicate change.²² In 1618, announcing a proposed drainage scheme, James I declared that 'improvement and enclosure' were justified if they 'tend to the good of our commonwealth, the relief and right of the borderers and lawful commoners thereof . . . and the just increase of the revenue of the Crown'.²³

Official rhetoric and actions on the question of enclosure would shift significantly following harvest failures in the late 1620s and 1630s, but they continued to be influenced by a combination of ideology and pragmatism. In 1631 the privy council observed that 'many great enclosures' in the Midlands had been 'very hurtful to the commonwealth although they beare a fayre shewe of satisfaction to all parties who are concerned in the grounds enclosed. But we well know withall what the consequences will be, and in conclusion all turn to depopulation'.²⁴ The elision of the distinction between enclosure 'by agreement' and depopulation was symptomatic of a renewed intensity in the pursuit of enclosers between 1631 and 1632. This was a response to real anxieties about grain supplies in the wake of poor harvests, as well as a manifestation of William Laud's alleged 'fanatical prejudice' against enclosure. By the mid-1630s, however, enclosure commissions had become little more than revenue-raising devices, designed to encourage the payment of a fine in composition rather than

²² A.F. Pollard and M. Butcher (eds.), 'Hayward Townshend's Journals', *BIHR* 12 (1934-5), 10 [Bacon]; Sir Simonds D'Ewes (ed.), *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, (1682), p.674 [Cecil]; A. McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England* (Cambridge, 1995), p.175; R.W. Hoyle, 'Shearing the Hog': The Reform of the Estates, c.1598-1640', in Hoyle (ed.), *The Estates of the English Crown, 1558-1640* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.220-27.

²³ Cited in R. Hoyle, 'Disafforestation and Drainage: The Crown as Entrepreneur', in Hoyle (ed.), *Estates of the English Crown*, p.378.

²⁴ Cited in Hindle, 'Persuasion and Protest', 73.

the suppression of enclosures.²⁵ The privy council, moreover, made a distinction between the enclosure of common fields and the 'improvement' of waste grounds such as that effected by the crown's disafforestation and fen drainage schemes. Tracts like Robert Powell's *Depopulation arraigned* (1636) facilitated this distinction, when they talked of the devastation wreaked by depopulating enclosure, yet described the benefits to be gained by 'approvement' of 'wasts, woods and pastures, so farre as they are warranted by severall Lawes and Statutes'.²⁶ The fact that these projects could have traumatic social consequences and that similar schemes carried out across the country were often accompanied by the enclosure of common fields was neatly elided by the evocation of the emotive imagery of depopulation.²⁷ As a mediator in local conflicts over the enclosure of commons and wastes, however, the privy council was obliged to speak in the language of Stuart paternalism and could find itself articulating the potential for oppression in these types of enclosure. During one such dispute in 1637, the Council signalled its sympathy with the commons by demanding the 'equitable' apportionment of allotments and promising to punish the 'frowardnes or perversity' of any who proved unsatisfied with 'what shall be reasonable and equal'.²⁸

²⁵ Thirsk, 'Changing Attitudes to Enclosure', pp.527-31.

²⁶ Robert Powell, *Depopulation arraigned, convicted and condemned by the laws of God and man* (1636). Cf. Laud's apparent willingness to support enclosures 'founded on lawe' (A.E. Bland, P.A. Brown and R.H. Tawney (eds.), *English Economic History: Select Documents* (London, 1914), pp.276-77n). Despite its adherence to government policy in this respect, Powell's treatise can also be read as an (unsuccessful) appeal to the crown to once again order the restitution of farms destroyed by enclosure. Powell, a common lawyer, had made investigations for the Somerset enclosure commission in 1632, an experience that had prompted him to write his treatise (sig.A2^v (Epistle)).

²⁷ Powell, *Depopulation arraigned*, p.96.

²⁸ Hindle, 'Persuasion and Protest', 57.

I.ii. Commerce and Credit

The expansion of commerce and reconfiguration of economic activity towards production for the market over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries stimulated debate over the ethics of economic relationships. Increasing contention over the legality of charging for loans, along with the experience of excessive interest rates in an unregulated money market, provide the context for the usury act of 1571.²⁹ Despite parliament's insistence that this was an act *against* usury, 'forasmuch as all Usurie being forbydden by the Lawe of God is a synne and detestable', the statute tacitly approved the taking of up to 10 per cent interest on loans. This legislation had the effect of normalising the concept of a standard rate of interest in recognition of the loss of potential profit. Calvin's distinction between 'biting' usury and legitimate increase gained more ground and by the 1620s many policymakers recognised the economic and social benefits of 'this easy borrowing of interest'.³⁰ When the usury act came to be amended in 1624, the agonising over ensuring that man's law remained compatible with divine precept had been replaced by pragmatic concerns over how to ensure the wheels of commerce could turn efficiently and with the greatest collective benefit.

Norman Jones has argued that this legislation was the culmination of two generations of theological debate and economic experience, which had 'combined unintentionally to relegate the ethics of economic relationships to the realm of conscience'. The increasing emphasis in religious literature on

²⁹ The evolution of the concept and practice of usury, including the background to the acts of 1571 and 1624 is discussed in N. Jones, *God and the Moneylenders* (Oxford, 1989). Now see also E. Kerridge, *Usury, Interest and the Reformation* (Aldershot, 2004), which offers a reappraisal of the views of Luther, Calvin and others.

³⁰ Francis Bacon quoted in C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.114.

‘considerations of conscience’ is thus linked directly with the growth of individual freedom in economic affairs.³¹ The clarity and thoroughness with which Jones has traced developments in the understanding, practice and regulation of usury has made his work an invaluable contribution to the study of economic change in this period. The confidence with which he couples an increasing focus on the individual conscience with the triumph of individualism, however, is open to question. Jones’ argument underrates the extent to which protestant narratives of repentance constructed a dialectical relationship between conscience and behaviour, and between the individual and the community. The (re)interpretation and scrutiny of actions were offered as the basis for the activation of the faculty of conscience, and the subsequent formation of true knowledge and judgement. It was not then enough to keep these judgements to oneself; rather, they had to be communicated through the social currency of reputation.

That wealth itself in this period was ‘gained through reputation, not accumulation, individualism or inward piety’, has been effectively demonstrated in Craig Muldrew’s study of the ‘economy of obligation’ that structured the expansion of commerce and exchange. Where Weber described seventeenth-century economic development in terms of the emancipation of the individual from the fetters of the moral economy, Muldrew argues that these changes helped men redefine this ethical code in terms of ‘the cumulative unity of the millions of interpersonal obligations which were continually being exchanged and renegotiated’.³² Insofar as protestant theology influenced the reordering of

³¹ Jones, *God and the Moneylenders*, pp.5, 149.

³² Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.123-24.

the social environment, therefore, it was principally in the increasing emphasis on trust within everyday social relations, which mirrored the protestant emphasis on faith. The virtues of honesty and thrift became integral to the concept of godly self-discipline, but their renewed discursive currency was part of a broader response to the increasing reality of household interdependence. The exercise of thrift was not only a means to attain individual wealth but, alongside the duty of charity, was also one of 'the social ideals which [kept] the community together'. The widely shared struggle to reconcile the competing and sometimes contradictory duties inherent in these ideals helps to explain the popularity of household management manuals, such as Thomas Tusser's *Five hundred points of good husbandry* (1573), and their apparent effectiveness in encouraging some men to live 'within their bounds'. Thus these texts were not, as some have suggested, the harbingers of an 'individualist discourse' structured by 'a heightened appreciation of personal property'.³³ As Muldrew argues, 'the fact that most moveable wealth was increasingly in the form of mutable credit' actually led to a 'more relaxed notion of property'. Men were certainly becoming more aware of the insecurity of their moveable goods and 'more concerned with property as right' through the conflict generated by the increasing number of exchanges on credit. Nevertheless, they responded by emphasising not the sanctity of private property, but the need to achieve 'serial security' within the community.³⁴

Although it was leading merchants who were the most prominent theoreticians of commercial exchange, therefore, the growth of the market, and

³³ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, ch.5, pp.165, 239, 298; McRae, *God speed the plough*, pp.148-51.

³⁴ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.210-11 and *passim*.

especially the increase in transactions on credit, inflected discourse and practice at all social levels.³⁵ Poor households of course suffered most from a lack of credit, through a combination of competitive failure and the moral judgements of their social superiors. Nevertheless, the poor actively participated in market transactions – as producers as well as consumers – and in litigation for the recovery of debts. Between 1680 and 1683, over half the suits dealt with by the borough court at Kings Lynn were initiated by the town's poorer inhabitants, many of whom were suing their social superiors. There remained, moreover, a strong ethical imperative to lend freely to the poor and to forgive their debts where necessary. More generally, the exercise of leniency and discretion was necessary insurance in a culture of rapidly communicated credit, where a reputation for hard dealing could jeopardise a creditor's bargaining power in the future. Since most litigation was initiated as a threat to secure the recovery of a debt rather than with the intention of punishing the debtor, only the 'chronically untrustworthy' were imprisoned, as a means of removing them from credit networks. Most of the prisoners in King's Bench, Muldrew suggests, were formerly wealthy tradesmen who had become insolvent through over-reaching themselves.³⁶

Muldrew has persuasively recreated the discourses and ethics through which men made sense of – and made possible – increasing interaction with the market. Most importantly for our present purposes, moreover, he has shown that many contemporary texts embodied and advanced the dialectical relationship between continuity and change. This helps us to question the idea that a text must be

³⁵ J. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-century England* (Princeton, 1978), pp.35-51.

³⁶ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.41, 181, 248-55, 286-87, 303-12.

categorised as 'residual' or of only peripheral discursive importance if it does not immediately appear to contribute to a shift in patterns of thought.³⁷ Muldrew is also acutely aware, however, that in an intensely competitive society the preservation of the Christian virtues of love and charity were increasingly 'seen to depend on the coercive presence of the authority of the civil law'. In other words, as Paul Fideler has suggested with regard to the practice of poor relief, these were communities struggling to reconcile the principles of *societas* with those of *civitas*.³⁸

I.iii. Poverty and Paternalism

The century and a half prior to 1650 witnessed the development and implementation of a national poor-relief system based on compulsory rating. The commonplace view of the making of the poor law identifies a series of incremental legislative steps, formulated out of dialogue between the centre and the localities and gradually enshrining the fundamental principles of centralised, differential charity.³⁹ Recently, however, one of the chief architects of this narrative has warned against the temptation among historians of the poor law 'to overstate both its insularity and the smooth inevitability of its legislative evolution'. In an essay on the sixteenth-century advancements in English welfare

³⁷ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.154.

³⁸ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.203; C. Muldrew, 'The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England', *HJ* 39:4 (December 1996), 915-42; P.A. Fideler, '*Societas, Civitas* and Elizabethan Poverty Relief', in C. Carlton with R.L. Woods, M.L. Robertson and J.L. Block (eds.), *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of A.J. Slavin* (Stroud, 1997), pp.59-69. Fideler describes the ideals of *societas* (custom, morality, voluntary association) and of *civitas* (the mandates of policy and law), as 'sometimes complementary and sometimes competing' forces.

³⁹ E.M. Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief* (Cambridge, 1900); P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London and New York, 1988), ch.6; M.K. McIntosh, 'Local Responses to the Poor in Late Medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change* 3:2 (1988), 209-45.

policy, Paul Slack argues that the influence of foreign models on the mid-Tudor statutes and on the refashioning of civic hospitals after the Reformation should not be underestimated. These models were then developed in response to the experience and interpretation of economic change at home, and re-exported back to the continent. Thus London's Bridewell had no foreign parallels on its foundation in 1552 but before long other workhouses had begun to spring up in European cities.⁴⁰ Questions about the 'smooth inevitability' of the legislative drive towards the poor rate have also been raised by an appreciation of the longevity of a preference for voluntarism and undifferentiated charity and of the challenge posed to these ideals by the practical experience of their limitations.⁴¹ Despite the animosity displayed towards mendicancy in Tudor and Stuart legislation, there remained into the late sixteenth century a strong ethical imperative towards charity 'at the door'.⁴² The *Homilies* of 1596 urged men to visit the homes of those who were 'ashamed to begge and crave thy Charitie' but at the same time reminded congregations that '[w]ee are all Gods beggers, that God therefore may acknowledge his beggers, let us not despise ours'.⁴³ The campaign for general hospitality in this year depended on this generosity of spirit towards the 'shamefaced' poor becoming widespread among both the rich and the middling sort. Steve Hindle has convincingly argued that the experience of this campaign explains both the restriction of begging to the resident poor in the

⁴⁰ Slack, 'The Common Weal', in *Reformation to Improvement*, pp.16-21.

⁴¹ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990); I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England', *Journal of Modern History* 72 (June 2000), 295-338; S. Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms: The Campaign for General Hospitality in Late Elizabethan England' *P&P* 172 (August 2002), 44-86. For evidence of resistance to taxation for the poor in the 1570s see Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp.125-26.

⁴² Thomas Scott, *The Belgicke pismire stinging the slothfull sleeper, and awaking the diligent to fast, watch, pray; and worke out their owne temporall and eternall salvation with feare and trembling* ([Holland], 1622), p.75.

⁴³ *Three sermons, or homelies to move compassion towards the poor and needy* (1596), sigs.B6^v, E8^r.

1598 statute and the swift transition after this date from ‘the notion of undifferentiated charity’ to ‘the principle of discretionary relief’. In this sense the official homiletic sympathy towards *all* beggars may be seen as the calm before the storm of the late 1590s, when attitudes began to harden in the face of the realities of economic change.⁴⁴

An increasing emphasis in religious literature on the need for discrimination between the deserving and undeserving poor was not, therefore, purely the product of protestant theology but also owed at least as much to ‘the hard times in which these sermons were preached’. It is true that some of the sharpest reproofs to vagrants and most wholehearted praise of legislation against them were propagated by the ‘hotter sort of protestants’ but this was a question of emphasis rather than exclusivity. In his most recent work Hindle is acutely sensitive to the dynamics of continuity and change, pointing out that many sermons continued to warn of the dangers inherent in too much discrimination and that sometimes it might be necessary to give to the ‘undeserving’.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he insists that ‘discrimination did eventually become the central idiom of charitable discourse’. Thus the emotive appeals to compassion – although undoubtedly present in protestant treatises on the practice of charity – were increasingly subordinated to an instructive idiom designed to help the giver rationalise his charitable practice.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hindle, ‘Dearth, Fasting and Alms’, 48.

⁴⁵ S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* ([Forthcoming] Oxford, 2004), pp.99-104. Cf. E. Duffy, ‘The Godly and the Multitude in Stuart England’, *The Seventeenth Century* 1:1 (April 1986), 33.

⁴⁶ Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.102-04. For the place of compassion in the sermons of the famous Elizabethan preacher Henry Smith see P. Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002), pp.283-86.

Hindle is among several historians who have helped to displace puritan social ideology from a position of splendid isolation outside the intellectual currents of the past.⁴⁷ Some, such as Neil Rushton, have encouraged us to re-examine the supposedly indiscriminate nature of monastic charity. Others, most notably Margo Todd, have detected the fingerprints of Christian humanism on almost all aspects of puritan social thought.⁴⁸ Much of the debate over the nature of puritan attitudes towards wealth was of course stimulated by Weber's discovery of a nascent 'spirit of capitalism' in protestant worldly asceticism. Weber did not, as many have assumed, suggest that Calvinists saw the mere existence of riches as a mark of divine approval. He was as aware as many of his critics that '[e]xamples of the condemnation of the pursuit of money and goods may be gathered without end from Puritan writings' and insisted that only wealth attained 'as a fruit of labour in a calling' was considered a sign of God's blessing.⁴⁹ It is certainly true, however, that Weber paid little attention to a

⁴⁷ As well as those mentioned below, see B. Tierney, 'The Decretists and the 'Deserving Poor'', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1 (1958-9), 360-73; S. J. Pope, 'Christian Love for the Poor: Almsgiving and the 'Preferential Option'', *Horizons* 21:2 (1994), 295-96; P. Collinson, 'Puritanism and the Poor', in R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones (eds.), *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.242-58.

⁴⁸ N. S. Rushton, 'Monastic Charitable Provision in Tudor England: Quantifying and Qualifying Poor Relief in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Continuity and Change* 16:1 (2001), 29-31; M. Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987). For a contrasting view see P.A. Fideler, 'Poverty, Policy and Providence: The Tudors and the Poor', in Fideler and T.F. Mayer (eds.), *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth* (London, 1992), 198-99. The influence of humanist thought on the formation of early Tudor policy is discussed in G.R. Elton, 'An Early Tudor Poor Law', in Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government Volume II: Parliament and Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1974), pp.137-54; P.A. Fideler, 'Christian Humanism and Poor Law Reform in Early Tudor England', *Societas* 4 (1974), 269-84; J.A. Guy, 'The Tudor Commonwealth: Revising Thomas Cromwell', *HJ* 23:3 (September 1980), 681-87.

⁴⁹ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (London, 1930), pp.157, 172. The 'Weber thesis' and some of its critics are discussed in A. Fanfani, *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and its Critics* (London, 1939); E. Fischhoff, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: The History of a Controversy', in S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (1968), pp.67-86; D. Little, *Religion, Order and Law: A Study in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1969), ch. 2; R. Whatmore, 'The Weber Thesis: 'Unproven yet Unrefuted'', in W. Lamont (ed.), *Historical Controversies and Historians* (London, 1998), pp.95-108. For the post-Weber debate over the existence of a puritan work ethic see especially T. Breen, 'The Non-Existent Controversy: Puritan

powerful counter-current in puritan literature – the doctrine that divine favour was displayed in trials as well as in rewards. It was this strain of thought that encouraged puritan preachers such as Charles Pinner to declare that ‘the greatest number of us, I meane the brethren, are poore, and not rich’.⁵⁰ Weber’s identification of derogatory attitudes towards poverty is skewed, furthermore, by his emphasis on late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writings. Christopher Hill identified similar attitudes in the preaching of William Perkins, which, he claimed were part of the process whereby the employing classes sought to ‘transform the mental outlook of the lower orders so that they no longer waited at the gate for charity, but went out to offer their services on the labour market’.⁵¹ As Eamon Duffy has argued more recently, much of the assumed hostility to the poor derives from a misunderstanding of the term ‘multitude’. The difficulty of defining exactly what preachers meant when they employed this term is part of a wider ‘problem of interpreting language which might at first sight seem to translate directly across into socio-economic equivalents’.⁵²

Our understanding of puritan ethics has certainly been advanced by a more nuanced appreciation of their origins and perceived purpose and by the widespread acceptance that puritan preachers were not the ideological servitors of a particular social group. There is a danger, nevertheless, that too much stress on the intellectual precedents of puritan attitudes towards poverty can obscure

and Anglican Attitudes on Work and Wealth, 1600-1640’, *Church History* 35 (1966), 273-87; C. Hill, ‘Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism’, in Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England*, pp.15-39; P. Seaver, ‘The Puritan Work Ethic Revisted’, *JBS* 19:2 (Spring 1980) 35-53; C.J. Sommerville, ‘The Anti-puritan Work Ethic’, *JBS* 20:2 (Spring 1981), 70-81.

⁵⁰ Charles Pinner, *Two sermons on these wordes of Peter the apostle, honour all men, love brotherly felowship* (1597), pp.66-67.

⁵¹ C. Hill, ‘William Perkins and the Poor’, in Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1958), p.224.

⁵² Duffy, ‘The Godly and the Multitude’, p.37.

the distinctiveness of puritan social reform. Although there are undoubtedly, as Todd argues, numerous points of contact between the proposals of Erasmian humanists and puritan social theorists, puritanism brought a new enthusiasm to these projects and prescribed a newly pervasive culture of monitoring and discipline. In this way, Slack suggests, puritan social activism did have a peculiar – if unreachable – destination: ‘the ultimate purpose of Puritan social reform, of the fashioning of welfare according to the dictates of justice and mercy, was public edification’.⁵³ The surveillance of the poor was a particularly important aspect of puritan social welfare, since it allowed English protestants to synthesise their own practice with the welfare systems of continental Calvinist churches.

Beyond their use as an expression of protestant identity, English welfare policies were also designed to publicise the paternalism of the monarch. The orders for general hospitality emphasised the ‘great and princely care’ and ‘gracious and tender affection’ of the Queen towards her poor subjects. This rhetoric was echoed in the books of dearth orders issued periodically between 1587 and 1633.⁵⁴ These orders both reflected and reinforced the popular notion that the poor had a right to purchase locally produced grain at the local market, either at a ‘just price’ or at a regulated ‘under-price’.⁵⁵ A principal demand of the dearth orders, therefore, was for county benches to carry out surveys of grain and ensure that all surplus stock of farmers and corn merchants was conveyed to the market. Local magistrates, however, recognised some of the limitations of this

⁵³ Todd, *Christian Humanism*, *passim*; Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, pp.46-49.

⁵⁴ B. Quintrell, ‘The Making of Charles I’s Book of Orders’, *EHR* 95:376 (July 1980), 553-72; P. Slack, ‘Books of Orders: The Making of English Social Policy, 1577-1631’, *TRHS* 5th ser. 30 (1980), 1-22.

⁵⁵ J. Walter and K. Wrightson, ‘Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England’, *P&P* 71 (May 1976), 22-42; P. Slack, ‘Dearth and Social Policy in Early Modern England’, *Social History of Medicine* 1 (1992), 1-2, 6-7.

policy of market regulation. It was no use having markets well stocked with corn if the poor lacked sufficient employment or help from the parish poor rates to be able to purchase it. In areas where little arable farming was practised, the encouragement of local chauvinism destabilised networks of local supply. In other counties where corn was plentiful, both magistrates and middlemen might be reluctant to reverse an established practice of circumventing the local market in order to participate in an increasingly integrated national market in grain. In 1631, for example, a number of Norfolk farmers were accused in Star Chamber of 'inhausing of the prices of *Corne* and graine'. They defended their breach of the dearth orders on the basis that 'it is not the usage of that Country to carry any *Corne* to the market'. The Star Chamber judges meted out the usual exemplary punishment 'to the end other persons of like uncharitable disposition may take warning thereby' but mitigated the sentence somewhat 'in respect that their offences seeme to be somewhat qualified by the Licence given them by the Justices'.⁵⁶ There could be little consistency, however, in the government's attitude towards the transportation of grain, since the danger of popular disorder in grain-producing areas had always to be balanced against the necessity of ensuring the supply of large urban markets. The unpopularity and inadequacy of the dearth policy nevertheless provide the key to an assessment of its lasting impact. The failure of market regulation and discomfort with the 'absolute authority' that lay behind it forced local magistrates and parish officers to articulate the alternative: a system of local taxation that had 'the law to back it'. Grain searches proved unpopular with many in the localities, but they

⁵⁶ Powell, *Depopulation arraigned*, sigs. K6^v, L7^v.

nevertheless encouraged the habits of surveillance and calculation that would be essential to the administration of this system.⁵⁷

The exceptional pace of change over the course of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries stimulated anxiety over the condition and meaning of the commonwealth. This manifested itself in various reinterpretations of the physical landscape and of the social responsibilities entailed in the ownership of land; in new forms of social description that underlined the prevalence of market relationships; and in an increasing emphasis on the need for discretion and regulation in the fulfilment of the charitable imperative. These contemporary responses were formulated in dialogue with the material effects of the Reformation and with a protestant theology that demanded a relationship of trust with God and of brotherly love with one's fellow man. The synthesis of this dialogue was not, however, the formulation of a legitimising discourse that sanctioned the untrammelled march of possessive individualism. The key to economic success and to continued economic development was the maintenance of high stock in the social currency of 'reputation'. One of the most striking effects of demographic change and rising prices was the redistribution of national wealth. The benefits of this initially redounded to a relatively large proportion of agricultural producers but were soon restricted to those with the greatest competitive edge and the ability to respond to the fluctuating demands of the market. One group, however, for whom 'the economic experience of the second

⁵⁷ Slack, 'Dearth and Social Policy', 9-12, 15-17.

and third quarters of the sixteenth century was emphatically one of loss' was the church.⁵⁸ The lay control over church livings that resulted from this disendowment was only one of several factors, however, that helped shape the heterogeneous fortunes and changing profile of the parochial clergy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

II CLERICAL FORTUNES

II.i. Economic Pressures

The dissolution of the monasteries and chantries between the 1530s and 1560s brought about a seismic shift in the relative distribution of land between church and crown. Once this land was placed on the market, it provided an unprecedented opportunity for expansion among existing gentry families and a way into landed society for numerous 'new men' – primarily merchants and rich clothiers. In most cases, the purchase of a whole manor brought with it the right to present the minister. Any tithes or glebe land that had formerly been appropriated to the monastic overlord were henceforth the property of the lay impropiator.

The consequences of this shift in the balance of power between the vast institution of the church and propertied individuals resonate across our period and throughout the following chapters. The conditions of the clergy were not, of course, determined solely by the acquisitiveness of a landed elite. 'In reality', as Felicity Heal writes, 'the church was ground between the upper millstone of

⁵⁸ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.141.

inflation and the nether millstone of lay power'.⁵⁹ The effects of inflation on the beneficed clergy depended to a large extent on what proportion of their income was received as a fixed monetary payment. Vicars with no glebe land or tithes in kind were therefore especially vulnerable and often reliant on the generosity of a lay patron. Rectors who received corn tithes in kind, on the other hand, were in a position to benefit from rising prices. Inflation and the diversification of agricultural production help explain the increasing number of tithe disputes that reached the ecclesiastical and common law courts. Although many of these causes were instigated by lay impropiators, there were nevertheless a number of ministers who were prepared to risk their reputation for neighbourliness and charity by challenging for their 'due'. In some cases, protracted tithe suits were one symptom of a fundamental breakdown in relations between the incumbent and his flock, but they were more often part of the quotidian negotiation and resolution of parochial conflict. Whilst tithe suits might antagonise individual parishioners, they were rarely sufficient cause for the complete alienation of the minister. They might, however, provide useful ammunition for anyone wishing to portray him as 'a very contentious, troublesome man'.⁶⁰

Clerical experiences of enclosure present a similarly varied picture. There is much contemporary comment on the potentially devastating effect of enclosure on the minister's livelihood.⁶¹ The link between the decay of tillage

⁵⁹ F. Heal, 'The Economic Problems of the Clergy', in Heal and R. O'Day (eds.), *Church and Society in England, Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), p.107.

⁶⁰ C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford, 1956), ch.5; C. Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', in Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.68-69; W.J. Sheils, 'The Right of the Court': The Clergy, Tithe and the Courts at York, 1540-1640', in Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *The Church and Wealth* (Studies in Church History 24, Oxford, 1987), pp.231-55; P. Marshall, 'John Otes and Carnaby, 1563-1600', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 71 (1999), 185-99; C. Haigh, 'The Troubles of Thomas Pestell: Parish Squabbles and Ecclesiastical Politics in Caroline England', *JBS* 41:4 (October 2002), 405-07.

and the destruction of religious life was captured in the emotive image of ‘a sheepcote in the church’, which retained its resonance into the seventeenth century. Whilst the complete desuetude of the parish church was an unlikely result of agrarian change in this period, enclosure of open fields – whether by agreement or by manorial lords – usually reduced income from tithes and swallowed up scattered glebe land. Even where common fields remained, landlords often paid no tithe – or offered only inadequate pensions in lieu of tithe and glebe – on enclosed parks.⁶² Under legislation of 1548, furthermore, enclosed common wastes and reclaimed land were exempt from tithe. Enclosure was therefore frequently responsible for a reduction in the income pertaining to a benefice. For pastors with particularly large glebe farms, however, or for those whose status as private farmers gave them a competitive advantage in their local community, these possible losses might be offset by an awareness of the potential benefits to be gained from more efficient and profitable farming. Thus the minister might be responsible for putting forward the case for enclosure of the common fields, as was the case in Bassingham (Lincs.) in 1629, for example. In other cases, the parson was in a position to compensate for the loss in income from tithe and glebe by negotiating the private purchase of a lease from an enclosing landlord.⁶³

⁶¹ For example, Francis Trigge, *The humble petition of two sisters; the Church and Common wealth: for the restoring of their ancient commons and liberties, which late inclosure with depopulation, uncharitably hath taken away* (1604), sigs.E7^v-8^r; Powell, *Depopulation arraigned*, pp.31-32, 63-65.

⁶² Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.137; Manning, *Village Revolts*, p.110; Hill, *Economic Problems*, pp.104-05.

⁶³ Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.106; Lincolnshire Archives Office Bassingham Enclosure Petition 264/i and ii; Parker, ‘Agrarian Revolution at Cotesbach’, 62-63.

II.ii. Professionalisation and Career Progression

Many of the economic problems faced by the post-Reformation clergy represented a continuation or intensification of issues that had long concerned their Catholic predecessors. The profile of the clergy themselves, however, was to change dramatically by the mid-seventeenth century. Where a degree was unusual amongst incumbents outside London in the 1540s, by the 1620s 'recruitment into the Church at parish level was overwhelmingly graduate'.⁶⁴ These clerics found opportunities for the display of their learning and rhetorical skill not only in the parish pulpit, but also in sermons intended for special occasions, such as those preached at court, at Paul's Cross or at local assizes and visitations. In addition, they provided the personnel for at least eighty-five combination lectures and innumerable stipendiary lectures in towns and rural parishes.⁶⁵ As the clerical estate became increasingly secure in its 'professional' identity, its popularity boomed. Historians such as Mark Curtis and Paul Seaver have certainly exaggerated the extent to which the surplus supply of ordained clerics created a group of 'alienated intellectuals' who used the institution of puritan lectureships to vent their frustration with the existing systems of church government. Nevertheless, the competition for benefices was certainly intense, meaning that local connections, reputation and not infrequently a large payment were required to secure a living.⁶⁶ The incomes attached to these of course varied

⁶⁴ R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979), p.2.

⁶⁵ P. Collinson, 'Appendix: A Gazetteer of Combination Lectures', in Collinson, *Godly People: Essays in English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), p.563.

⁶⁶ M. Curtis, 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', in T. Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe* (1965), pp.295-316; P. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships* (Stanford, 1972); O'Day, *The English Clergy*, ch.1. For the difficulties faced by unbeneficed clergy in the early sixteenth century and Reformation decades see M.L. Zell, 'Economic Problems of the Parochial Clergy in

widely and were often dependent on the will of a powerful lay patron. Thus, although we may talk of the emergence in this period of a clerical profession with a similar educational background and institutions that perpetuated a sense of collegiate identity, it nevertheless remains the case that 'little progress was made towards providing an hierarchy of income paralleling professional advancement'.⁶⁷ Between 1560 and 1640 various schemes were proposed to remedy this situation, of which the most radical and ambitious was the project of the Feofees for Improvements. The failure or suppression of these schemes can be attributed either to the strength of vested interests or to their perceived threat to the established order.⁶⁸

Christopher Hill's survey of the economic problems faced by the church in the seventy years before the civil war has vividly reconstructed some of the ideological battles and parochial struggles through which the post-Reformation clergy fought out their roles and livelihoods. The unreformed disparities in clerical incomes and lifestyles intensified, Hill claims, divisions within the clerical estate, which eventually came to resemble the 'government' and 'opposition' factions of landed society. Most historians would now agree that there were more points of contact between the various levels of the clerical hierarchy than Hill's narrative allows. Parish ministers were very much involved in ecclesiastical discipline, for example, being responsible for the presentment of offenders and the enforcement of punishments. Many of the parochial clergy who acted as court officers in consistory or at the visitation, furthermore, were 'of

the Sixteenth Century', in R. O'Day and F. Heal (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800* (Leicester, 1981), pp.19-43.

⁶⁷ M. Hawkins, 'Ambiguity and Contradiction in 'The Rise of Professionalism': The English Clergy, 1570-1730', in A.L. Beier, D. Cannadine, and J.M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), p.250.

⁶⁸ Hill, *Economic Problems*, ch.6.

puritan persuasion'.⁶⁹ It is of course true that the organisation and practice of the clerical élite did not escape criticism. Although the support of the presbyterian cause that was manifest in the 1580s was not sustained into the early seventeenth century, there remained a powerful strain of polemic directed against cathedral foundations and cathedral officers. The idleness of deans and prebendaries was criticised by clergy across the ecclesiological spectrum but the most stinging attacks came from puritans, one of whom described cathedrals as a haven for 'lazy, loitering lubbards, the very harbourers of all deceitful and timeserving hypocrites'.⁷⁰ A principal charge that was levelled at cathedral clergy was that they neglected the duties of preaching and teaching, whilst filling their pockets with the proceeds from profitable benefices. Although many of those in the higher reaches of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were more skilled as administrators or lawyers than as pastors, some members of the clerical elite undoubtedly took seriously their pastoral responsibilities. Protestant laymen expected 'to see their bishop in the pulpit' and several Jacobean bishops such as Tobias Matthew and Joseph Hall fully lived up to these expectations.⁷¹

II.iii. Pastoral Ideals

The centrality of preaching to the pastoral role dominated theological discourse in the late sixteenth century. The guidance offered to the 'faithful shepherd' by

⁶⁹ Hill, *Economic Problems*, *passim*; O'Day, *The English Clergy*, pp.198-202. For the use of the church courts to effect a puritan 'reformation of manners' see K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), pp.119, 155-57.

⁷⁰ A. Peel, ed., *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, (2 vols., Cambridge, 1915), II, p. 211. I owe this reference to Dr Ian Atherton. For a summary of this anti-Cathedral polemic see C. Cross, 'Dens of Loitering Lubbers': Protestant Protest against Cathedral Foundations, 1540-1640', in D. Baker (ed.), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest* (Studies in Church History 9, London, 1972), pp.231-37.

⁷¹ O'Day, *The English Clergy*, ch.11; K. Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford, 1990), pp.83-91.

divines such as Richard Bernard and William Perkins was focused almost exclusively on the art of preaching.⁷² Historians have recently argued over the extent to which this new model of the minister as preacher conflicted with traditional expectations of the parson's social role as pastor and peacemaker. Christopher Haigh has suggested that the 'woman in the pew – or the man on the ale-bench', rejected the godly ideal of the hell-fire preacher in favour of the 'good fellow' or sociable neighbour. Their views, Haigh suggests, were shared by a number of clerics in the Elizabethan church. Leonard Wright's 'Pattern for pastors', published in 1589, is the most comprehensive articulation of this rival ideal. Whilst Haigh is certainly over-simplifying Wright's argument when he describes it as a 'deprecation of preachers and commendation of good pastors', it is nevertheless the case that Wright appropriated and redefined the office of 'preacher' to encompass the work of the 'meaner sort of ministers . . . working in the Lordes vineyarde in some measure, whether it be by writing, reading, or speaking without booke'. Such a man 'may bee a good Preacher, though not so fitte for the Pulpet'. The 'doing preacher' in Wright's model led 'by example of good vertuous living, and charitable hospitalitie' and rejected 'contentious sermons' in favour of the bare reading of scripture or homilies.⁷³

⁷² P. Collinson, 'Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings: The Pastoral Ministry in Post-Reformation England', in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (Studies in Church History 26, Oxford, 1989), p.186; Richard Bernard, *The faithfull shepherd . . . enlarged both with precepts and examples, to further young shepherds practice in the end* (1621); William Perkins, *The arte of prophesying or, A treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and method of preaching* (1592); William Perkins, *Exhortation to repentance . . . together with two treatises on the duties and dignitie of the ministrie* (1605); Charles Richardson, *A workeman that needeth not to be ashamed. Or, The faithfull steward of Gods house. A sermon describing the duety of a godly minister, both in his doctrine and in his life* (1616).

⁷³ C. Haigh, 'The Taming of Reformation: Preachers, Pastors and Parishioners in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *History* 85:280 (October 2000), 575, 576; C. Haigh, 'Success and Failure in the English Reformation', *P&P* 173 (November 2001), 28-49; Leonard Wright, 'A patterne for pastors', in Wright, *A summons for sleepers* (1589), pp.48, 51, 54. The 'traditional' role of the minister is discussed in P. Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), esp. pp.194-210.

The separation of preaching and pulpit and the unequivocal rejection of ‘hell-fire’ preaching paved a different path to salvation than that proposed by godly protestants. ‘Christ by the Preaching of his word’, wrote the Northamptonshire minister Robert Cawdrey, ‘doth discover the elect and reprobate’.⁷⁴ By implication, a zealous sermon would separate the elect sheep drawn to repentance from the reprobate goats who scoffed at the preacher’s message. Godly divines insisted that the minister had no need to make this division between his congregation explicit. In the name of ‘charity’ he should differentiate between the sin and the sinner – ‘hate the sin and love the person’. Discretion was necessary, warned Cornelius Burges, even when reproofing a ‘publique sin’ known to all by a ‘common rumor and publique fame’. The preacher should not ‘let the Congregation see’, Burges insisted, that ‘this man or this woman onely is now reproved’. ‘Personal invective’ was evident not only in the direct naming of individuals but also in an allusion to ‘any mans Person by his Complexion, cloathes, stature, [or] speciall marke of his habitation’.⁷⁵ Visitation articles of the 1630s recognised that much ‘particular preaching’ was indeed of this allusive and indirect kind, with preachers referring to individuals by ‘circumlocution, description, or by other signification and meaning’.⁷⁶ Although preachers might not always intend the specificity that was claimed for

⁷⁴ Robert Cawdrey, *A treasure or store-house of similies* (1600), sig.C2^v. Contemporary belief in the critical place of sermons in the process of salvation is discussed in J. Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes Towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640* (Cambridge, 1986), ch.5 and E.J. Carlson, ‘The Boring of the Ear: Shaping the Pastoral Vision of Preaching in England, 1540-1640’, in L.J. Taylor (ed.), *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Brill, 2001), pp.249-96.

⁷⁵ Joseph Bentham, *The societie of the saints: or, A treatise of good-fellowes, with their good-fellowship: delivered in the lecture of Kettering in Northampton-shire, in foureteene sermons, with some additions* (1636 edn.), p.10; Cornelius Burges, *The fire of the sanctuarie newly uncovered, or, A compleat tract of zeale* (1625), sigs.L12^r, T9^{r-v}.

⁷⁶ K Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Records and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church* (2 vols., Woodbridge, 1994-8), II, pp.11, 203.

their message, it is unlikely that they were the unwitting victims of wilful misinterpretation as often as they liked to claim. The pulpit, after all, was not only a source of spiritual guidance but also a medium for the policing of the boundaries of the moral community.⁷⁷

Haigh has made an important contribution to our understanding of the development of the protestant pastoral model by identifying rival ideals about the nature and purpose of preaching. These had their roots in the late sixteenth century but would be elaborated in the 1620s and 30s, when official opposition to divisive preaching was made increasingly clear. As we shall see, these polemical strands are a vital part of the ideological context of 'occasional' sermons in this period, as well as those preached in the parish.⁷⁸ It is certainly true that Haigh pays insufficient attention to the potential combination of these pastoral models in practice, tending to assume a direct link between fictionalised figures and parochial reality. This leads to a somewhat one-dimensional view both of the puritan clergyman's agenda and of the wants and needs of the 'ordinary' parishioner. Eric Carlson and Arnold Hunt have effectively criticised this aspect of Haigh's argument.⁷⁹ Hunt in particular, through his research into manuscript sermons, has been able to present a more nuanced picture of the combination of pastoral roles in an individual ministry and of the interaction between the preaching minister and his parishioners. Where Haigh traces a consumer-led shift

⁷⁷ For a contrasting argument that '[c]harges of particularizing might well be nothing more than deranged fantasies' see E.J. Carlson, 'Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds? Parish Ministers and the English Reformation', *History* 88:291 (July 2003), 423-36.

⁷⁸ See below, chs.2 and 4.

⁷⁹ Carlson, 'Parish Ministers and the English Reformation'; A. Hunt, 'Preaching and the People' (Unpublished Paper). I am very grateful to Arnold Hunt for providing me with a copy of this paper prior to publication. For earlier studies of the multifaceted nature of protestant divinity see E.J. Carlson, 'Practical Divinity': Richard Greenham and Parish Ministry in Elizabethan England', in Carlson (ed.), *Religion and the English People, 1500-1640: New Voices, New Perspectives* (Kirkville, 1998), pp.147-98; A. Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in Early Modern

in the attitude of some protestant ministers from 'confrontation' to 'accommodation', Hunt offers case studies of more complex experiences among the protestant clergy. Certainly the pulpit became a dominant and therefore highly charged site of moral coercion, but it was also one context for the continual negotiation of contradictory expectations and ideals.⁸⁰ The various attempts to reclaim and reshape the virtues of good neighbourhood and charity to make them compatible with godliness were part of this negotiation. Godly self-fashioning in the form of polemic or hagiography often insisted on the minister's ability to enjoy 'familiar society' with his parishioners and to exhibit an understanding of, and respect for, their quotidian working lives.⁸¹ Economic pressures and the fragility of reputation made personal and professional failure a real possibility for the protestant ministry, but this was not an inevitable result of predestinarian preaching.⁸²

III READING SERMONS: CONSENSUS, CONFLICT AND CRITICISM

The negotiations that took place at the parish level form an important contextual backdrop to the latter part of this study in particular. The vast majority of texts on which this thesis is based, however, were occasional sermons preached outside

England', *P&P* 161 (November 1998), 39-83; D. Marcombe, 'Bernard Gilpin: Anatomy of an Elizabethan Legend', *Northern History* 16 (1980), 20-39.

⁸⁰ Haigh, 'Taming of Reformation', 577; Hunt, 'Preaching and the People'. For one contemporary account of a seventeenth-century puritan minister who was said to have combined 'vehement & powerfull' preaching with skill in 'making peace' see John Quick, *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae* [Transcript in Dr Williams Library], pp.87-89.

⁸¹ See, for example, Arthur Dent, *The plaine mans path-way to heauen. Wherein euery man may clearly see, whether he shall be saved or damned. Set forth dialogue wise, for the better understanding of the simple* (1601), sig.B2^r; Quick, *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*, p.235; Samuel Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines, famous in their generations for learning and piety, and most of them sufferers in the cause of Christ* (1677 edn.), p.136.

⁸² P. Lake, 'Richard Kilby: A Study in Personal and Professional Failure', in Sheils and Wood (eds.), *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay*, pp.221-35.

the parish. Recent scholarship has made us aware of the complex political role played by these sermons and how this might be reconstructed using an interdisciplinary approach that takes into consideration both literary form and historical context. We have come a long way from the dry taxonomic analysis of J.W. Blench's *Preaching in England* (1964), which, whilst acutely sensitive to the rhetorical construction of sermons, offers little insight into how this imbued the texts with their social meaning.⁸³ The current appreciation of the need for a considered 'contextual' approach to early modern sermons is, however, not without its precedents. Millar Maclure's *The Paul's Cross Sermons* was the first study of a specific genre of sermons, which sought to examine the transformative effects on this institution of 'political devices and theological conflict' during and after the Reformation.⁸⁴ Though this approach leaves little room for sustained analysis of individual sermons, Maclure's book nevertheless provides an informative introduction to the broad thematic content and stylistic considerations through which these texts were constructed. His 'Register' of Paul's Cross sermons, for all its incompleteness and unreliable summaries, has nevertheless proved a valuable resource for the further investigation of sermons preached here. More recent studies have discussed Paul's Cross sermons as a barometer of doctrinal change or, more commonly, have drawn on the homiletic preaching of the Paul's Cross 'jeremiad' to consider the impact of providentialist preaching and its affinity with aspects of popular culture. Alexandra Walsham and Peter Lake, in particular, have explored the links between the theatre of the

⁸³ J.W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1964). For a similar approach to seventeenth-century sermons see W. Mitchell, *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson: A Study of its Literary Aspects* (London, 1932). For a more recent study of sermon rhetoric, which links its common forms to other genres of public pronouncement see Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, ch.8.

⁸⁴ M. Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642* (Toronto, 1958), p.v.

pulpit and that of the players.⁸⁵ Their researches remind us that sermons not only shared and appropriated the providential narratives of pamphlets and plays, they were also, both in their preached and published form, in intense competition with these texts. Both genres became more readily available as the market for luxury goods expanded. Indeed, the market for sermons was beginning to become saturated by the early seventeenth century, forcing clerical authors and their publishers to come up with more imaginative marketing strategies.⁸⁶

Recent scholarship has also drawn our attention to the sermons preached at the Elizabethan and Jacobean court. Peter McCullough's *Sermons at Court* and Lori Anne Ferrell's *Government by Polemic* are both deeply concerned with the question of 'contextualisation'.⁸⁷ For McCullough, this process involves a remarkably detailed reconstruction of the liturgical and spatial contexts in which these sermons were delivered. He has demonstrated that the interpretation of an individual sermon was shaped by the circumstances of its delivery – including the preacher's awareness of the composition of his audience – and that far from being an arena where criticism was out of bounds, the relatively private surroundings of the royal chapels created space for 'prescription as well as praise'.⁸⁸ Central to Ferrell's analysis, meanwhile, is the contention that

⁸⁵ A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), ch.6; P. Lake with M. Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London, 2002), ch.9. See also P. Pauls and J.C. Boswell, *Register of Sermons Preached at Paul's Cross 1534-1642* (Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies Occasional Publications 6, Ottawa, 1989); N. Tyacke, 'Appendix: From Calvinist to Arminian: The Doctrinal Tenor of the Paul's Cross Sermons', in Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), pp.248-65; P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), ch.1; M. McGiffert, 'God's Controversy with Jacobean England', *American Historical Review* 88 (1983), 1151-74; M. Morrissey, 'Elect Nations and Prophetic Preaching: Types and Examples in the Paul's Cross Jeremiad', in L.A. Ferrell and P. McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised* (Manchester, 2000), pp.43-58.

⁸⁶ I. Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp.210-14.

⁸⁷ L.A. Ferrell, *Government by Polemic: James I, the King's Preachers, and the Rhetorics of Conformity, 1603-1625* (Stanford, 1998); P. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁸⁸ McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p.105 and *passim*.

‘[c]ontextualisation is the opening up of texts to their historical meaning, not the crude locating of texts in the past’. In this connection, texts must be seen to have played ‘active roles, not supporting ones, in the course of history’. The particular trajectory traced in her book is that of the rhetorical assimilation, over the course of James I’s reign, of ‘moderate’ puritanism into the stereotype of the dangerous and seditious schismatic. The king – ruling through words rather than actions – took the lead in setting the rhetorical agenda that was elaborated by a significant number of his court preachers.⁸⁹

The most stringent criticism of these recent developments in sermon studies can be found in Ian Green’s *Print and Protestantism*. Green believes that Ferrell and McCullough have placed too much emphasis on the high political content of these sermons, ignoring the fact that preachers considered princes and nobles to be ‘sinners like any other men and women’ and were primarily concerned with their moral and spiritual wellbeing.⁹⁰ Green’s critique of these historians is undermined, however, by his apparent disregard of some of the subtleties in their arguments. To suggest that any criticism was muted by preachers’ stress on ‘their support for what they saw as the status quo’, is to do no more than confirm McCullough’s observation that preachers were familiar with the ‘time-honoured way to instruct one’s betters through praise of an ideal’. To point out that James did not act decisively to silence Calvinist preachers at Paul’s Cross mounts no significant challenge to Ferrell’s identification of an essentially ‘*rhetorical* pre-Laudianism’, which thrived in the ‘deceptive lull caused by James’s disinclination to persecute Puritans’.⁹¹ It is fair to say, nonetheless, that in her

⁸⁹ Ferrell, *Government by Polemic*, pp.17-18, 93, 133 and *passim*.

⁹⁰ Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp.201-02.

⁹¹ McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p.84; Ferrell, *Government by Polemic*, p.5 [emphasis added].

important mission to debunk the myth of a 'Jacobean consensus', Ferrell has built a certain inflexibility into her analysis of the language of religious polemic. There is little evidence, for example, of the strain of criticism directed against 'lukewarm' or 'hypocritical' protestants that we might expect to find in these sermons.⁹² It could also be argued that Ferrell has underplayed the importance of theological debates over predestination in her attempt to demonstrate the Jacobean origins of anti-puritanism. As David Como has recently shown, the question of predestination had become 'politicised' by 1629, as Laud and his acolytes redefined its most vociferous proponents as a threat to the political nation. Such studies help demonstrate the difficulty of trying to 'separate theology and polemic into two separate fields of discourse'.⁹³ Green, in his bid to refocus attention on the moral and doctrinal content of these sermons over and above their political 'spin', is arguably as guilty as Ferrell of this false dichotomy. The field of sermon studies is likely to be somewhat impoverished if, instead of searching for the *multiple* historical meanings of these texts, we seek to subordinate one level of meaning to another.

A key to exploring these meanings, it will be argued here, is an understanding of the inherent indeterminacy of language. As Annabel Patterson has argued, an awareness of censorship helped produce mutually understood 'codes of communication' between the authors and recipients of texts.⁹⁴ As we shall see, preachers were adept at exploiting a shared awareness of the principles

⁹² Cf., for example, Robert Wilkinson's description of 'the unfaithfulness and treachery of them that seem to love us', which Ferrell reads as a 'reference to English Puritanism' rather than to the hypocritical, formal 'professor' we find in other Calvinist texts (Ferrell, *Government by Polemic*, p.40).

⁹³ D. Como, 'Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud's London', *HJ* 46:2 (June 2003), 263-94; A. Hunt, 'Review Article: A Jacobean Consensus? The Religious Policy of James VI and I', *The Seventeenth Century* 17:1 (April 2002), 139.

⁹⁴ A. Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison, 1984), p.17.

of rhetorical persuasion and disguise, and of subtly imbuing authoritative ‘truths’ with a specificity of meaning appropriate to their particular context.⁹⁵ The employment of ‘strategies of indirection’ was a vital limiting factor in the crown’s ability to ‘tune the pulpits’. As Arnold Hunt’s study of preaching in the wake of the Essex revolt reveals, ‘it was possible to convey a political message indirectly, by stating a general doctrine and leaving it to the audience to supply the obvious application to current events’.⁹⁶

It is important to recognise that censorship, as elaborated by Patterson, is not merely an act of political will carried out by the archbishop and his delegates but a structuring – indeed an enabling – device for all forms of political communication. Of course, it must be acknowledged that the strategies of ‘functional ambiguity’ that are manifest in the published sermon text, do not convey the full range of techniques through which the preacher in the pulpit could enhance or particularise his message.⁹⁷ The recent historiographical emphasis on the performative nature of preaching draws our attention to the potential significance of intonation and gesture in dramatising the sermon.⁹⁸ Puritan divines strove to police the boundaries between subtle gestures that ‘utter[ed] the godly affections of the heart’ and ‘vain and fantastical motions’ or ‘stagelike gestures’ that brought the art of prophesying into disrepute. Godly auditors, however, continued to flock to the most ‘theatrical’ of preachers, such

⁹⁵ See below, *passim*.

⁹⁶ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p.45; A. Hunt, ‘Tuning the Pulpits: The Religious Context of the Essex Revolt’, in Ferrell and McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised*, p.107.

⁹⁷ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p.18.

⁹⁸ F. Bremer and E. Rydell, ‘Performance Art? Puritans in the Pulpit’, *History Today* 45:9 (September 1995), 50-54; Walsham, *Providence*, ch.6; L.A. Ferrell and P. McCullough, ‘Introduction: Revising the Study of the English Sermon’, in Ferrell and McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised*, pp.2-21; Lake, *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, chs.9-11.

as William Whately, the ‘roaring boy’ of Banbury.⁹⁹ Whilst we cannot recapture the nuances of such performances, it is possible, as the later chapters of this thesis suggest, to speculate about how the preacher might have exploited his physical surroundings and the composition of his congregation to freight his words with a particular meaning.

This brings us to a second interpretative problem: the relationship of the words on the page to the words preached. It was customary, as Perkins put it, for preachers ‘to speake by heart before the people’. Whilst it was quite possible for clerics to write out the full text of their sermons in advance and then learn them by heart, this was thought by one preacher at least to be ‘a heavy laboure, both lothsome, & needlesse’.¹⁰⁰ Even manuscript sermons, or the author’s manuscript copies on which posthumous published sermons were based, may have been transcribed *after* they had been preached.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, any minister called to preach on a special occasion would have been aware that such sermons were among the most likely to get into print and that his oratorical skill would be scrutinised particularly closely by a learned audience. These circumstances may have encouraged him to produce, if not a full text, then certainly particularly detailed notes. Both assize sermons and court sermons, however, were subject to the constraints of time, each normally being expected to last around an hour. Publication in these cases offered an opportunity to elaborate and expand on

⁹⁹ Perkins, *The arte of prophesying*, p.672; Bernard, *The faithfull shepherd*, p.38; Lawrence Chaderton, *An excellent and godly sermon most needefull for this time . . . Preached at Paules Crosse the xxvi. daye of October, an. 1578* (1578); Henry Scudder, ‘The life and death of Mr William Whateley’, prefixed to William Whately, *Prototypes, or, The primarie precedent out of the booke of Genesis* (1640), sigs.a2^v-a3^r; *DNB*, XX, pp.1341-42.

¹⁰⁰ Perkins, *The arte of prophesying*, p.670; Anthony Anderson, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse, the 23 of Aprill* (1581), sig.A2^v (Epistle).

¹⁰¹ Hunt, ‘Preaching and the People’.

particular points of exegesis or exhortation.¹⁰² In other cases, where a series of sermons had been preached on a particular theme or in a single pulpit, a preacher might choose to remould his material into the genre of a treatise, the form of which might make it difficult to distinguish one sermon from another.¹⁰³ As well as additions and refashioning, the printed text might be subject to deletions. Infuriatingly for any scholar wishing to discover the nuances of the preached event, certain 'Uses and Applications of the Points' thought appropriate to the particular audience and occasion might be removed from the published text.¹⁰⁴ There is also some evidence to suggest that preachers were more direct in their spoken than in their written criticisms, despite the frequent warnings about the dangers of personal preaching.¹⁰⁵

IV THE CONSCIENCE OF THE COMMUNITY

The following chapters explore clerical critiques of wealth and power in England between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. These will be considered as both a medium for the negotiation of, and a means of representing, a changing economic, social and religious landscape. The first chapter reconsiders the trajectory of this criticism from what is often thought of as its

¹⁰² Cf. William Westerman's epistle to his assize sermon, which noted that it had been 'abridged by the hower', and that publication offered him the opportunity to give them 'more free vent, and libertie, where everie man may bee carver of his owne time' (*Two sermons of assise: the one intituled; A prohibition of revenge: the other, A sword of maintenance. Preached at two severall times, before the right worshipfull judges of assise, and gentlemen assembled in Hertford, for the execution of justice* (1600), sig.A3^r (Epistle)). A similar acknowledgement of the text's expansion is found in Richard Pecke, 'The great day dawning. Or, Christs neerenes to judgement. Delivered in a sermon before the judges, at the Lent-assizes in Exeter. Anno 1632', in Pecke, *Two sermons delivered at St. Peters in Exeter* (1632), Epistle.

¹⁰³ See below, ch.5.

¹⁰⁴ John Rogers, minister of Dedham (Essex), cited in Bremer and Rydell, 'Puritans in the Pulpit', 51.

¹⁰⁵ See below, ch.4.

zenith in the 1540s, examining the dynamics of continuity and change and enduring points of contact with the 'hidden transcript' of popular protest.¹⁰⁶ The second chapter then traces the articulation of social criticism in the neglected genre of printed assize sermons, discussing how this criticism was moulded to its occasion and audience. Far from offering mere confirmation of a harmonised universe at one in its understanding of the ethical exercise of authority, these sermons were capable, it will be argued, of fracturing the legitimising strategies of governance. Most of the material used in this second chapter is drawn from the early Stuart period, reflecting the chronological distribution of surviving printed assize sermons.¹⁰⁷ Part of the analysis therefore deals with the various religious and political tensions that developed in the decade prior to the civil war.

An awareness of the heightened religious politics of the Caroline period is also central to two of the three case studies, which form the latter part of the thesis. Each of these chapters focuses on the printed sermons of a single clergyman. The first centres around sermons preached by Bezaleel Carter of Cavenham (Suffolk) in his own parish and in the nearby town of Clare; the second on an assize sermon by the Devon minister Thomas Foster; and the third on a series of lectures by Joseph Bentham, rector of Broughton (Northamptonshire). All of these works – published between 1618 and 1635 – are concerned in some way with 'social' questions. Among the subjects they address are: increasing poverty; clerical dependence on the laity; responses to

¹⁰⁶ The concepts of the 'hidden transcript' of the subordinated and the 'public transcript' articulating the legitimacy of rule were conceived and elaborated by James Scott in his *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990). For the appropriation of these notions to the 'infrapolitics' of the subordinate in early modern England see J. Walter, 'Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England', in Walter and M. Braddick (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.123-48.

¹⁰⁷ See below, Appendix, pp.349-70.

dearth and commercialisation; and the social effects of agrarian change. These case study chapters concentrate on the experience and interpretation of these changes in specific local contexts, and ask how these combined with factional and competitive tensions to influence both the formulation of the text and its reception by its intended audience. An important factor in selecting these texts was the alleged offence they caused to some of their auditors, or, in Bentham's case, the apparent intention to single out individuals. These reported reactions can illuminate the potential agency of sermons in the communication of reputation. The decision to seek out explicit instances of alleged 'particularising' helps to explain why all three of these clergymen occupy the Calvinist end of the ecclesiological spectrum. Ceremonialist churchmen, whose vision of worship undermined the specific soteriological function of sermons, were unlikely to produce texts that declared their use of the pulpit to separate the sheep from the goats. The religious tensions on which these three chapters focus, therefore, are not the intensely polarised divisions between Arminians and puritans, but rather the struggles over the identity of 'moderate' puritanism and over the distinguishing characteristics of the truly godly.

The inclusion of the phrase 'the conscience of the community' in the title of this thesis is intended to draw attention to its interrogation of both the origins and the broader resonance of clerical complaint. Central to the following chapters is the contention that whilst some preachers might portray themselves as lonely voices crying out in a hostile moral universe, they in fact drew in various ways on shared experiences of change. In so doing, it is argued, they refashioned and elaborated traditional paradigms, shaping them into a powerful and vital medium of criticism. This is not to say that the texts studied here offered uncontested

moralised narratives that compelled unquestioning collective repentance, nor that their authors were disinterested advocates of the cause of the oppressed. Detailed analysis reveals the slippage between various ‘interests’ – including those of the author himself – and between the different communities – the godly, the parish, the commonwealth – on behalf of whom the preacher claimed to speak. That these texts are often combative, contradictory and compromised in their moral positioning, therefore, enhances their complexity as cultural artefacts. The ‘conscience of the community’, moreover, not only refers to the persona adopted by the clerical moralist, but also to his imagined site of moral judgement. The following chapters will examine how preachers constructed narratives of individual repentance that adhered to an essentially ‘social’ view of sin, both in terms of its effects and of its estimation.

CHAPTER ONE

Discourses of the Common Weal: Clerical Complaint c.1540-c.1640

I DEFINITIONS AND TRAJECTORIES

The medieval genre of ‘complaint’ was preoccupied with manifestations of covetousness, greed and oppression. Drawing heavily on patristic sermons, radical preachers and friars were prominent among the religious moralists who helped place this paradigm at the centre of homiletic discourse during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ This tradition of social criticism was given a new lease of life by evangelical preachers and pamphleteers in the mid-sixteenth century, who coupled their rhetoric of spiritual liberty with a renewed concern for the social and economic ills of their nation. Complaint was not, however, a literary strategy tailored to analysing the underlying causes of socio-economic distress, or offering detailed proposals for institutional reform. Rather, it was both an articulation of, and an appeal to, the demands of ‘conscience’. This association was confirmed by the foundation of the court of Chancery (the court of ‘conscience’) in the fifteenth century, to which aggrieved parties submitted bills of ‘complaint’.² The persuasive force of complaint in the form of sermon or pamphlet was generated by the divine word of Scripture and by the emotive power of the authorial voice. This voice often explicitly spoke up for the weak

¹ J. Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford, 1956), p.53.

² J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3rd edn. (London, 1990), ch.6.

against the strong, a posture which demanded a certain identification of the author with the miseries of the poor.

Any discussion of complaint as a genre is complicated, however, by its dual meaning in current historiography. Whilst it is often used in the sense outlined above, it has also been adopted as the term to describe protestant sermons and tracts bemoaning popular ignorance and 'pagan' festivities.³ Of the tracts which dealt primarily with the former, the best-known is George Gifford's *A brief discourse of certain points of the religion which is among the common sort of Christians, which may be termed 'the country divinity'*, published in 1581. The title is indicative of the distant and despairing stance taken by this author and other godly preachers towards the apparently wilful ignorance of some of their flocks.⁴ Protestant preachers were concerned with the conduct as well as the knowledge of their congregations. From the 1570s they contributed to the texts associated with the 'reformation of manners' movement, although as Ronald Hutton has pointed out, this literature constitutes a small proportion of the output of even the godly clergy.⁵ Within this discourse, diatribes against the 'old-style merry-making', were usually combined with more vehement attacks on newer forms of sociability such as attendance at plays.⁶ Rather than being continually focused on a small range of targets, however, it has been suggested that this form

³ Most historians do not make a clear distinction between these two forms of complaint. One of the few to do so is Alexandra Walsham, who distinguishes between 'a much older tradition of moral complaint' and 'Elizabethan clerical literature of complaint' (A. Walsham, 'A Glose of Godlines': Philip Stubbes, Elizabethan Grub Street and the Invention of Puritanism', in S. Wabuda and C. Litzenberger (eds.), *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from his Students* (Aldershot, 1998), p.194).

⁴ For differing perspectives on the purpose of these texts see Haigh, 'The Taming of Reformation', 572-88; Duffy, 'The Godly and the Multitude', 31-49.

⁵ R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p.128. Hutton counts thirty-five examples of attacks on seasonal festivities in the Elizabethan period, although he admits that the category of 'complaint literature' is 'somewhat imprecise', thus making it difficult to arrive at an exact figure (p.134n).

⁶ Hutton, *Merry England*, p.128.

of complaint literature underwent a 'narrowing of the focus of moralistic concern'. Keith Wrightson insists that the pamphlets and sermons of the reformation of manners movement were transformed from a 'comprehensive indictment of social evils' in the 1570s and 80s to an intense concentration on aspects of personal conduct such as drinking and swearing by the mid-seventeenth century.⁷ Thus the degree of overlap with an earlier tradition of social protest was significantly diminished as this literature of protestant complaint hardened into an attack on the vices of the poor. This alleged narrowing of focus is often linked explicitly to the changing social status of the godly minister and his increasingly firm alliance with the magistrate. By the early seventeenth century, historians such as Andrew McRae have argued, preaching was no longer primarily important as an instrument of social criticism in the name of the powerless, but rather as an instrument of social control in the name of the powerful.⁸

Whilst there remains an ongoing debate about the connection between later protestant complaint literature and the desire for social control, most historical writing on this subject nevertheless assumes that a qualitative change in the purpose and perspective of clerical complaint was taking place by this time. A similar trajectory has been traced with regard to the discourse of the

⁷ K. Wrightson, 'Postscript: Terling Revisited', in Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p.211n. For further discussion of the wide range of targets in late sixteenth-century social criticism see W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1983), p.79; M. Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), p.69.

⁸ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, ch.2. This is not to say that the 'campaign' for reformation of manners during this period was consistently led from the centre. Indeed, as Steve Hindle points out, the regime was distinctly ambivalent towards questions such as Sabbath observance which 'originated in the complaint literature of sermon and tract, and only gradually (if at all) found expression in administrative orders and in the law of the land' (S. Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.194).

‘commonwealth’. This ideal, which encompassed both collective material welfare and social cohesion, suffused much of the literature of social commentary, political analysis and popular protest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Historians such as Helen White have talked of a ‘commonwealth tradition’, with its roots in the classical ideal of *res publica*. David Starkey has shown that the language of the common weal first emerged in English political discourse during the fifteenth-century propaganda battles between Yorkists and Lancastrians. The common lawyer John Fortescue was the most prominent political commentator of this time to argue that the king ruled in the name of the body politic and to the end of the *bonum commune*, or protection of his subjects’ lives and livelihoods.⁹ This discourse also featured in petitions on behalf of the ‘true and faithful Commons’, which urged the king to look to the ‘commonweal’ of his subjects and avoid oppressing them with a burden of ‘great impositions’.¹⁰

But it was in the early sixteenth century, through the writings of Christian humanists, that the commonwealth became a powerful mantra in social analysis and the formation of social policy. For men such as Thomas More and Thomas Starkey, moreover, *res publica* was not so much a description of a static entity as an ideal to be actively sought. The rational actions of the people themselves could bring about a flourishing political community built on the foundations of universal justice.¹¹ The mid-sixteenth-century

⁹ H.C. White, *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1965), ch.2; D. Starkey, ‘Which Age of Reform?’ in D. Starkey and C. Coleman (eds.), *Revolution Reassessed* (Oxford, 1986), pp.19-21; John Fortescue, ‘In praise of the laws of England’, in S. Lockwood (ed.), *John Fortescue on the Laws and Governance of England* (Cambridge, 1997), ch.xxxviii, p.53.

¹⁰ Petition from Robert Redesdale in 1469 cited in Lockwood (ed.), *Fortescue on the Laws and Governance of England*, p.94n.

¹¹ More, *Utopia*; Thomas Starkey, *A dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T.F. Mayer (Camden Society 4th ser. 37, London, 1989).

‘commonwealthsmen’ may have lacked the humanists’ faith in reform through policy but they nevertheless shared much of the vocabulary and assumptions of this commonwealth ideal and its associated dissection of the nation’s social ills. For pamphleteers, preachers and politicians such as Robert Crowley, Hugh Latimer and John Hales, the ideal commonwealth required the suppression of the sin of covetousness and the exercise of paternalistic duties on the part of the propertied. The strength of the commonwealth was thus measured through the manifestations of the ‘society’ or ‘fellowship’ of mankind, rather than in purely economic terms. To put it another way, it was the *use* to which the profits of wealth and benefit of office were put rather than the public sum of these profits that constituted the commonwealth in this sense.

A number of historians have argued that following these years of critical examination and condemnation the commonwealth entered a period of stagnation. Brendan Bradshaw has described the political culture of Elizabeth’s reign as one of ‘complacent conservatism’, offering only an ‘idealization of the present’. Whitney Jones has sought to modify this picture somewhat but nevertheless insists that commonwealth terminology, rather than being a slogan of protest or reform, began to be systematically harnessed to the service of monarchical power. Although the term continued to imply a social ideal, Jones has argued, ‘one may hardly speak of any meaningful *development* of the ideal of the commonwealth’ in the years from 1559 to 1639. More recently, in the work of Keith Wrightson, we have been introduced to the idea that the commonwealth was gradually ‘redefined’ around the turn of the sixteenth century. Specifically, Wrightson has identified a ‘shift in the definition of the interests of the commonwealth, from one centred upon a harmonious pattern of economic and

social relations to one stressing the virtues of national productivity'.¹² This process of redefinition entailed both a relocation of human relations from the patriarchal setting of the manor to the commercial arena of the marketplace and a revision of the social duties and moral virtues through which these relationships were formed. As Craig Muldrew has revealed in his important study of the all-embracing culture of credit in English communities, the exercise of 'thrift' came to be seen as both a sign of creditworthiness and an appropriate justification for tempering reciprocal duties towards neighbours.¹³ The virtues of national productivity came to be associated with a revised translation of the *res publica*: 'the public good'. This phrase was to be employed with enthusiasm in the poor relief tracts produced by members of the Hartlib circle.¹⁴ In the changed circumstances of the 1640s, therefore, when the commonwealth had attained real political meaning, these projectors reworked an existing discourse into a new strand of reformism.

The emphasis in the current historiography is thus most often placed on tracing the development (or degeneration) of commonwealth ideology over time. There has been some recognition, however, that various definitions of 'commonwealth' could co-exist, some of which were clearly complementary and some of which might appear to contradict one another. The most consistent element in this compound of meanings was the use of 'commonwealth' as a descriptive term for the state or nation. But even here there remained room for debate about the exact relationship between the commonwealth in this sense and

¹² B. Bradshaw, 'Review Article: The Tudor Commonwealth: Reform and Revision', *HJ* 22:2 (June 1979), 474; W.R.D. Jones, *The Tree of Commonwealth, 1450-1793* (London, 2000), p.141; Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, ch.2.

¹³ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.158-65, 306.

¹⁴ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, ch.4.

the other parallel entity of the 'church'. Furthermore, there was uncertainty over where responsibility for the common weal lay, and at times violent struggles to determine which social groups and corporate bodies might articulate and devise the path to its attainment.¹⁵ The overriding trend, however, has been to see the essential resolution of these uncertainties in the latter half of the sixteenth century, beginning with the 'conservative reaction' to the rebellions of 1549.¹⁶ Orthodox writers, including the clergy, are naturally judged to have played a crucial role in setting the boundaries of acceptable discourse and helping the commonwealth to shed its 'participatory' connotations.

The following chapter is divided into two broadly chronological parts. The first section concentrates on the agrarian complaints of the mid-Tudor 'commonwealthsmen'. It will consider how they developed the persona of 'poor man's advocate' and combined literary and ideological traditions into a social vision that had significant points of contact with the rhetoric of the 1549 rebellions. Attention will also be paid to the impact of the 'commotion time' in the summer of this year on the authors' rhetoric and on their positioning in relation to the plight of the poor. The second section is largely concerned with interrogating the trajectory of complaint and 'commonwealth' discourse outlined above. It will suggest that into the early seventeenth century the personae and structures of an older tradition of complaint literature remained the foundation of

¹⁵ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, ch.1; Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.46; Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 55.

¹⁶ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.51.

social critique and exhortation, but were elaborated and reconfigured in ways that reflected the different circumstances of their application. These circumstances included the changes in the role and status of the clergy after the Reformation. Whilst this cultural shift undoubtedly impacted on the self-identification of the clergy, it also widened the opportunities for participation in prestigious occasions such as the sermon at Paul's Cross. This institution evolved over the sixteenth century, becoming a prestigious weekly event in the life of an expanding metropolis. At the same time, the role of the clergy as the conscience of the metropolitan community was challenged by the rise of a literary underworld of satires and pamphlets, which claimed to speak authoritatively and authentically to the dilemmas of the urban existence. In this connection we will examine the extent to which the clergy, through the sub-genre of the Paul's Cross sermon, came to identify themselves with the social elite and the immediate concerns of social order generated by a burgeoning urban proletariat. The intention is to show that rather than merely becoming a servant of the sword, the sermon and the related attitude or structures of complaint remained a vital means through which the actions of the wealthy were interpreted and scrutinised.

This becomes even clearer when we move away from the boundaries of the metropolis to consider the ways in which clerical discourse more generally helped sustain moralised concepts of economic life and the distribution of wealth. The clergy will be shown to have both challenged and appropriated new methods of social description in their interpretations of the proper use of wealth and of the categories of donor and recipient in acts of charity. Several sermons and clerical treatises on charity were concerned to harmonise English practice with that of Calvinist churches on the continent and most displayed a preference

for voluntary giving. As such, these texts remained ambivalent towards the principle of statutory relief, even as they registered its increasing prominence as a response to poverty. Concern for the entitlements of the donor in the act of almsgiving are reflected in the widespread emphasis on the need for discretion and in the reinterpretation of the model of charity represented by the apostolic church. The enduring doctrine of stewardship nevertheless helped to sustain an idiom that emphasised the entitlements of the poor themselves. Persistent ambiguities also characterised attitudes towards the place of popular protest. The closing sections of this chapter will thus examine how sermons could continue to uphold the essential legitimacy of collective protest within the patriarchal polity.

II REVOLUTIONARY EVANGELISM: THE MID-TUDOR REVIVAL OF COMPLAINT

II.i. The Social Vision of the Edwardian Gospellers

During the early years of Edward VI's reign, the evangelical gospellers, or 'commonwealthsmen', produced what is undoubtedly a 'magnificent literature of protest'.¹⁷ Having rediscovered the pattern of life and literary models offered in Scripture, men such as Crowley, Latimer, Thomas Lever and Thomas Becon put these to work in their sermons and pamphlets. Whilst these men operated within the metropolitan sphere, their texts were nevertheless fashioned according to a colloquial 'plain' style designed to be accessible to a broad audience.¹⁸ With the

¹⁷ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.151.

¹⁸ J.N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, 1982), ch.3, especially pp.142-43. Cf. the publication of the Bible in six octavo parts by John Day (1549-51) which addressed 'the commoditie of these pore' by enabling them to purchase separate sections (King, *English Reformation Literature*, p.129).

lifting of prior censorship controls on Edward's accession, the number of publications flourished. The lord protector, Edward Seymour Duke of Somerset, both encouraged this outpouring of works from the press and was acutely conscious of its power as propaganda for the new religion and his own regime.¹⁹ Much of this material was principally concerned with religious confutation and controversy, but the complaints with which we are most concerned here focused on the corruption of the body politic, especially the effects of agrarian change in the form of enclosure or engrossing, non-residence of landholders and racked rents. The politician and lawyer John Hales was the figure closest to the quotidian operations of government and perhaps did most to ensure that social justice and religious renewal were firmly linked in the professed aims of the regime.

The social gospel of the commonwealthsmen was underpinned by an idealised vision of prerogative justice and of a mutually supportive agrarian society. Their writings stressed the importance of paternalism – especially in the form of rural hospitality – and the limits placed on property rights by the duty to give to the poor. Although their critiques could encompass every part of the body politic, the principal targets were the so-called ‘caterpyllers of the commune weale’: covetous rich men who had gathered too much of the nation's resources and profits into their own hands.²⁰ First and foremost among these were enclosing landlords, or ‘shepemongers’, who, in Thomas Becon's words, ‘oppresse the kynges lyege people by devourynge theyr commune pastures wyth theyr shepe’. Other commercial practices that threatened the stability of the

¹⁹ King, *English Reformation Literature*, ch.2.

²⁰ The phrase in this case is from Thomas Becon, *The jewell of joy* ([1550]), fo.15^r, but ‘caterpillar’ was a popular sobriquet in this period and beyond.

manorial community were also personified and attacked. The most comprehensive rogues' gallery was drawn up in Robert Crowley's *One and thirty Epigrammes* of 1550, in which 'forestallers', 'Leasemongars', 'Unsaciabie Purchaysars' and 'Usurars' took their place in an alphabetical list of moral and socio-economic abuses.²¹ Several of these texts also betray their authors' disappointment at the ends that were being served by appropriated monastic lands. At the hands of 'covetous officers', Lever observed, the suppressed abbey lands that should have served 'to the releve of the poore, the mayntenaunce of learning, and to comfortable necessary hospitalitie in the comen wealth', were now, 'turned to mayntayne worldly wycked covetouse ambition'.²² To limit the extent of corruption in the commonwealth, the king was urged not 'to laye . . . all on your offycers backes' and to 'se to the ministring of justice your own self' through the use of informers. Latimer also directed the injunction to 'heare poore mens sutes yourselfe' towards the lord protector. The centrality of the landlord-tenant relationship to this social vision was confirmed in the gossellers' characterisation of Somerset as a model paternalistic landlord as well as an exemplary Christian ruler. Latimer's audience would almost certainly have recognised the 'good duke' in his praise of 'one of tender zeale [who] at the motion of his poore tennauntes, hath let downe his landes to the olde rentes for their reliefe'.²³

²¹ Becon, *The jewell of joy*, fo.15^v; Robert Crowley, *One and thyrtye epigrammes, wherein are bryefly touched so many Abuses, that maye and ought to be put away* (1550).

²² Thomas Lever, *A fruitfull sermon made in Poules churche at London in the Shroudes the seconde daye of Februari* ([1550]), sigs.B7^r-B8^r. A similar complaint appears in the well known poem 'Vox populi, vox Dei': 'We have banyschyd superstysyon / but styll we kepe ambysyon / we have showtt awaye all cloystres / but styll we kepe extorsynares / we have taken there landes for ther abbwese / but we have convertyd theme to a worse use' (Tawney and Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents*, III, p.39).

²³ Hugh Latimer, *A moste faithfull sermon preached before the kynges most excellente majestye, and hys most honorable councell, in his courte at Westminster* ([1550]), sig.F6^v; Hugh Latimer, *Seven Sermons before Edward VI*, ed. E. Arber (English Reprints, London, 1869), pp.42, 72. In

In Latimer's preaching we are made aware of the gossellers' identification with the plight of the rural poor. Despite the illustrious surroundings in which he preached before the king, Latimer made explicit reference to his rural background, drawing on agrarian idiom from his 'contrye' and, most famously, illustrating the decline of the yeomanry through his own father's experience. He also positioned himself as an advocate of the poor, concluding one court sermon with 'a sute' for 'a poore woman that lyeth in the Flete'. Robert Crowley assumed the same role in a tract addressed to parliament, *An information and petition agaynst the oppressours of the pore commons of this realme* (1548). The 'pyllynge and pollynge of the poore commons' and fall to servitude of erstwhile 'honeste housholders' were laid at the feet of covetous 'possessioners'. Despite identifying himself as a 'humble and dayely Oratoure' to parliament, Crowley was prepared to risk alienating himself from his intended auditors by pointing out their collusion in placing private over public profit: 'even you (moste Christian counsaylours) . . . are not all so free from this kynde of oppression, but that you coulde be well contented to wyncke at it'. This voice of complaint was woven together with the idioms of Old Testament prophecy, most notably the warning from Isaiah 5:8 – 'wo be to you that do joyne house unto house, & couple one felde to an other'.²⁴

In combining the personae of poor man's advocate and divinely inspired prophet, the protestant gossellers drew on older traditions of social and religious protest. Their reinvigoration of native texts is most explicit in the publishing

the second session of the Parliament of 1549 Somerset had entered a private Bill which granted greater security to his copyhold tenants (see M. L. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset* (London, 1975), p.55).

²⁴ Latimer, *Seven Sermons*, pp.40-41, 74, 98; Robert Crowley, 'An information and petition agaynst the oppression of the pore commons of this realme' (1548), in Crowley, *Select Works*, ed. J.M. Cowper (Early English Text Society, London, 1872), pp.153, 161, 166-67.

history of Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Crowley edited and published the first printed edition of this text, transforming it in the process into 'a powerful revolutionary attack against monasticism and the Roman Catholic hierarchy'.²⁵ Although there were also sixteenth-century precedents for Crowley's attacks on monasticism and clerical wealth – most prominently in the works of Simon Fish and Henry Brinkelow – it was *Piers Plowman* that provided 'the formula for all [Crowley's] Edwardian poems: prophetic estates satire'.²⁶ Despite their humanist education, Crowley and his fellow gospellers subordinated classical models and illustrations to biblical *exempla* and rhetoric. The homiletic style of these sermons and pamphlets was also heavily influenced by the colloquial idiom, homely diction and theriomorphic imagery of medieval itinerant preaching. This style produced numerous indecorous puns, jokes and invective alongside the popular imagery of 'gredy woulves and comberous cornerauntes'.²⁷

Nevertheless, these sermons were also subject to more recent influences. The emphasis on the personal role of the monarch in securing widespread justice and reform was part of the radical understanding of kingship that had developed among early evangelists such as Clement Armstrong. Armstrong had little faith in a parliament 'which gettith their riches from the commonaltie to their owne singularitie'. Instead, he placed the king at the head of a radically reformed

²⁵ King, *English Reformation Literature*, pp.12, 322. Crowley published three editions of this text in 1550 under the title *The vision of Pierce Plowman*, and a fourth was published by Owen Rogers in 1561. After this the work remained out of print until the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Simon Fish, *A supplication of the poore commons* (1546); Henry Brinkelow, *The complaynt of Roderyck Mors, somtyme a gray fryre, unto the parliament howse of Ingland* ([Strasborg], 1542); King, *English Reformation Literature*, p.340.

²⁷ Thomas Becon, *The fortresse of the faythfull agaynst [the] cruel assautes of povertie and hunger newlye made for the comferte of poore nedye Christians* (1550), fo.15^v. For the influence of medieval preaching on Latimer especially see G. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Oxford, 1961); Maclure, *Paul's Cross Sermons*, pp.147-48. For the 'earthy' style of the reformers see King, *English Reformation Literature*, pp.93-94, 142.

agrarian order, in which landlords could not enclose for pasture since they were 'bound by God's laws to lead people to work the earth, as much as every possessor hath in possession'. The fruits of this labour would be distributed by the monarch, who would 'minister gift thereof to all his people, to feed them that followed with works to receive it of Christ'.²⁸ Aspects of a specifically humanist critique also influenced these texts. The vivid images of avarice in the countryside found in Thomas More's *Utopia* articulated more clearly than ever the learned social critic's 'active reckoning with the material world'.²⁹ In their ideal commonwealths both Catholic humanists such as More and evangelists such as Latimer explicitly linked the cause of religious reform to social justice. Both in different ways imagined the commons emancipated from the shackles placed on them by the greed of their superiors.³⁰ More's vision may have been the more radical, but the circumstances of the gospellers' preaching allowed their message to be appropriated by the commons themselves.

II.ii. The Impact of the Message

The Edwardian reformers were the heirs of an 'evangelical economics', which expected economic prosperity and social harmony to follow the liberation of the gospel from the papal Antichrist.³¹ During the Somerset years, this vision of a Reformed commonwealth in which the poor were free from oppression became a

²⁸ E. Shagan, 'Clement Armstrong and the Godly Commonwealth: Radical Religion in Early Tudor England', in P. Marshall and A. Ryrie (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), pp.76-77.

²⁹ L. Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995), p.74.

³⁰ For the interpretation of *Utopia* as a doctrine of liberation for the commons, including the 'marginalised and criminalised elements of late medieval European society' see B. Bradshaw, 'Transalpine Humanism', in J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.120-21.

³¹ E. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), p.274.

central feature of government propaganda and public discourse. Ethan Shagan has effectively demonstrated the importance of this political dynamic in creating a genuine dialogue between central government and the commons gathered in rebel camps during the summer of 1549.³² We do not have to regard the commonwealthsmen as a 'party' with direct influence over policy to recognise their role in perpetuating the structures and assumptions that underpinned this form of 'popularity' politics.³³ The dependence of successful religious reformation on the economic welfare of the lower orders was a constant refrain in sermons and tracts. Crowley promised the parliamentary assembly that if they found 'a redres of this greate oppression' of the commons then 'I doubt not but God shall so worke wyth you, that everie man shall wyllingly embrace a reformacion of all mattiers of religion'. John Hales recognised that the reputation of the new religion would depend on the ability of its professors to fulfil their social duties. Thus he criticised landlords who 'in their talk be all gospellers, and would seem to be favourers of God's Word' but in practice were covetous enclosers.³⁴

The term 'commonwealth' itself certainly maintained its multiplicity of meanings in the writings of poets, divines and pamphleteers, as it did in the reforming legislation of the period.³⁵ But there are hints that these authors were

³² E. Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions', 34-63. See also Shagan's reply to the criticism of Michael Bush and George Bernard: 'Debate: 'Popularity' and the 1549 Rebellions Revisited', *EHR* 115:460 (February 2000), 121-33.

³³ For the debunking of A.F. Pollard's description of the commonwealthsmen as a 'small but able party' see G.R. Elton, 'Reform and the 'Commonwealth-men' of Edward VI's Reign' in P. Clark, A.G.R. Smith and N. Tyacke (eds.), *The English Commonwealth 1547-1640* (Leicester, 1979), pp.23-25.

³⁴ Crowley, 'Information and Petition', p.169; BL Lansdowne MS 238, fo.320^v cited in Shagan, *Popular Politics*, p.270.

³⁵ For the use of common weal to imply 'body politic', 'state' and the general good in the legislation and proclamations produced during Somerset's regime see Elton, 'Reform and the 'Commonwealth-men'', pp.24-25. It should nevertheless be noted that even in the midst of the riots of 1549 Somerset could still insist to the assembled rioters that 'our hartes [are] inwardlye

capable of stripping these multiple meanings down to a 'populist' core, identifying the commonwealth explicitly with the economic welfare and just treatment of the poor commons. In one of Crowley's *Epigrams*, for example, the inhabitants of London are derided as 'a packe of people' that 'seke their owne gaine / but for the *wealth of the commons* / not one taketh paine'.³⁶ The gossellers' ability to cut through alternative interpretations of the commonwealth is further demonstrated in Thomas Cooper's preface to his 1548 edition of Thomas Elyot's Latin-English dictionary. Here Cooper urged the king to 'proceed forth to the advancement of the commonweal, that is, truly to minister justice, to restrain extortion and oppression, to set up tillage and good husbandry whereby the people may increase and be maintained'. Ironically, Elyot himself had rejected the translation of *res publica* as 'common weal'. This sense, he believed, was too close to the term 'commynalty', which 'signifieth only the multitude, wherein be contained the base and vulgar inhabitants not advanced in any honour or dignity'. Elyot had instead translated *res publica* as 'Public weal', thereby focusing attention on the governance of the realm 'by the rule of moderation and reason'.³⁷

Elyot recognised the potentially subversive elements of commonwealth discourse, not only in its focus on the welfare of the multitude, but also in its implication that 'every thing should be to all men in common, without discrepancy of any estate or condition'. If he had lived beyond 1546 he would

bent to your proffit and the common quiet of the realme' (Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions', 61).

³⁶ Crowley, *Select Works*, p.11 [emphasis added]. For a similar perspective see 'The decaye of England only by the great multitude of sheep' (1550-53), in Tawney and Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents*, III, p.53, which urges the king to increase tillage 'for the common welthe of the Kynges poore subjectes'.

³⁷ Thomas Cooper, *Bibliotheca Eliotae*, cited in Shagan, *Popular Politics*, p.279; Thomas Elyot, *The booke named the governor* (1531), ed. H.H.S. Croft, (2 vols., London, 1883), I, pp.1-3.

have been able to witness the realisation of his worst fears in the agrarian rebellions of 1549. Evangelical preachers were implicated in these riots on several levels. Most troubling for the status of the new religion were the charges that preachers had directly encouraged men to rebel with their promises of 'liberty'. The year after the rebellions Thomas Becon confronted these accusations in his dialogic treatise *The fortress of the faithfull*. His speaker Theophilus related the accusation that 'these newe preachers . . . throwe their indiscrete sermons, opened a large window on to dissolucion of lyfe, and by thys meanes caused the common people to aspire and breach unto carnall libertie'. Unable to deny this, Becon used his second interlocutor to castigate those preachers who had 'taken upon them the office of preaching uncalled, unsent, and such disordered preachers for the most part, bring all things to a disorder, yea to an utter confusion'. This 'unconvincing' defence, as Alec Ryrie has noted, offers a 'rare glimpse of the world of disreputable evangelicalism', a world whose existence is given credence by Becon's own admission. Kett's rebels camped at Mousehold in Norfolk may have had direct access to this world through the sermons of charismatic and popular evangelical preachers such as Cranmer's protégé Robert Watson.³⁸

The complex association between evangelicalism and 'populism' has recently been explored in considerable depth by Ethan Shagan. He has shown how the contingencies of Somerset's political position led him to employ a more highly charged strategy of 'popularity' than had hitherto existed between king and subject. Despite insisting on the sovereign power of the king, the protector's

³⁸ Becon, *The fortress of the faythfull*, sigs.D1^v-D2^r; A. Ryrie, 'Counting Sheep, Counting Shepherds: The Problem of Allegiance in the English Reformation', in Marshall and Ryrie (eds.), *Beginnings of English Protestantism*, p.101; D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996), p.433.

communications with the rebels were inflected with promises of government submission and compromise. In this way the government intimated that the commons could be initiators of policy as well as passive beneficiaries of aristocratic paternalism. Indeed, there is no attempt in the letters discussed by Shagan to re-affirm a world of manorial stability in which redress should be sought at the hands of local officers. Instead, Somerset attempted to use the rebellions as an opportunity to push through his programme of agrarian reform, against the wishes of wealthy landowners.³⁹

This recent research encourages us to look further at the points of contact between the reformers' preaching and the rhetoric of the rebellions of 1549. The vision of manorial society in which the commons stood united against the gentry underpinned the texts of the preachers and pamphleteers. Of course, this powerful normative description masked the more complex reality of social differentiation among tenants. At the same time, however, it was shaped by an awareness of the genuine erosion in status and income that rising rents brought for some yeoman tenants. Latimer's first sermon before Edward VI took unwelcome agrarian change as its closing theme:

My father was a yeoman, with a farme of .iii. or .iiii. pound by yere . . . and here upon, he tilled so much as kepte halfe a dosen men. . . . He was able and dyd fynde the kynge with hymselfe, and hys horsse, whyle he came to the place that he should receyve the kynges wages. . . . He kept hospitality for his pore neighbours. And sum almesse he gave to the poore, and all thys did he of the sayd farme.

³⁹ Shagan, 'Popularity' and the 1549 Rebellions', 129-33; 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions', 53-63.

Whilst observed experience certainly played a part in this description, it also drew on an enduring tradition of idealising the English yeomanry. Fortescue's vision of the participatory *dominium politicum et regale* had at its heart the industrious yeoman, at the centre of his local community as provider of charity and employment but also serving the king directly.⁴⁰

The gossellers, however, helped transform this vision of an idealised rural order. Where Fortescue had pictured a wealthy yeoman capable of devoting much of his time to political and legal service, Latimer saw an oppressed tenant 'not able to do any thing for his Prynce, for himselfe, nor for his children, or geve a cup of drinke to the pore'. Fortescue's praise of enclosure as a means to decrease 'the sweat of labour' was replaced by an explicit association of the yeoman with the ploughing of the land.⁴¹ This represented a fusion of two literary figures, the yeoman and the ploughman, the second of which had gradually metamorphosed from an exemplar of the simple Christian life to 'a radical spokesman for the commons against the enclosure movement and the misappropriation of monastic lands by the nobility'.⁴² In Latimer's sermons, therefore, 'yomans sons' became rhetorically equivalent to 'poor mens sons'.⁴³

⁴⁰ Latimer, *Seven Sermons*, pp.40-41; Fortescue, 'The Governance of England', in Lockwood (ed.), *Fortescue on the Laws and Governance of England*, p.119.

⁴¹ Fortescue, 'In Praise of the laws of England', pp.42-43; Latimer, *Seven sermons*, p.41. In *A voyce of the laste trumpet* (1549), a piece of Estates satire, Robert Crowley described the yeoman as 'thou that art borne the ground to tyll, / Or for to laboure wyth thynne hande' (Crowley, *Select Works*, p.63).

⁴² King, *English Reformation Literature*, pp.323-24. For the developing and contested connotations of the ploughman image in the later medieval period see also M. Camille, 'Labouring for the Lord: The Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter', *Art History* 10:4 (December 1987), 423-54; A. Hudson, 'Epilogue: The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', in J.A. Alford, (ed.), *A Companion to Piers Plowman* (Berkeley, 1988), pp.251-66; and D. Aers, '*Piers Plowman*: Poverty, Work, and Community', in Aers, *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430* (London, 1988), pp.20-72.

⁴³ In his first sermon before Edward VI Latimer declared that 'by yomans sonnes, the fayth of Christ is, and hath bene mayntained chefully'. When he came to explain and defend this comment in his third sermon he argued that, whilst 'some noble mens chyl dren had set forth Goddes worde, howe be it the poore mens sonnes have done it alwayes for the mooste parte' (Latimer, *Seven Sermons*, pp.42, 90).

That this rhetorical structuring was more widely prevalent in evangelical preaching is suggested by a passage in the poem 'Vox populi, vox Dei'. Preachers 'frome skottland into Kente', the author claimed, had urged the covetous rich to repent, whilst speaking up for the 'powr man', who was defined as ranging from the 'laboreng man' to the 'gud yoman'. Because of the intimate connection in evangelical thought between the economic welfare of the people and the success of the reformation, the fortunes of the clergy were also inextricably linked to those of the commons. Latimer captured this in his pithy epigram that enclosure and rent-raising would make 'yomanry slavery and the Cleargye shavery'.⁴⁴

This alignment of social forces and admixture of socio-literary figures is reflected in the priorities and rhetoric of 'Kett's demands being in rebellion'. Unlike the Pontefract Articles of 1536, clear attempts were made within this text to identify the rebels' demands with the needs of the 'pore subjects' and 'pore comons' of the realm.⁴⁵ Certain articles drew on the imagery of oppression, most notably in the demand that 'all bonde men may be made ffre' and also in the complaints about extortion by inadequate parish ministers. A preaching clergy, selected by the parishioners themselves and dedicated to their edification and education, would by contrast exist for the benefit of the commons. The articles also incorporated some of the imagery of independence and participation

⁴⁴ 'Vox populi, vox Dei', p.29; Latimer, *Seven sermons*, p.40. This uniting of the clergy and commons as 'laborers in the Reformation plowland' (King, *English Reformation Literature*, p.143) is also a theme of Latimer's 'Sermon of the plowers', delivered at Paul's Cross on 18 January 1548 and published as *A notable sermon of the reverende father Maister Hughe Latemer* (1548).

⁴⁵ The Pilgrims of 1536 had certainly appropriated the language of impoverishment in their grievances against taxation and enclosure (M. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), pp.310-11, 313). Nevertheless, it remains the case that none of this language appears in the rebels' central manifesto (reprinted in Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor rebellions*, pp.128-30).

associated with the figure of the yeoman. Article twenty-seven demanded an active role for the commons in government at the king's command, in the form of selecting commissioners 'to redresse and reforme . . . good lawes, statutes, proclamacions'. An attempt to reconcile the agrarian activities of more substantial farmers with the rhetoric of the government's reform programme is most evident in the first article, which enjoined that anti-enclosure legislation 'be not hurtfull to suche as have enclosed saffren [sovereign] grounds for they be gretly chargeablie to them' but also demanded that 'from hensforth noman shall enclose any more'.⁴⁶ But the overall worldview of the articles was shaped less by the specific economic interests of the leaders than by the necessity of presenting a united front among the 'poor commons'.

As MacCulloch has pointed out, the imaginary lost world which the rebels hoped to recapture – a society of 'watertight compartments' – was in fact 'too tidy for [their] ultimate comfort, for the articles were heavy with disapproval of social mobility in any direction'. He suggests that the rebel leaders, all of whom were substantial men, 'presumably lost sight of the implications of their demands in their concern to keep the company of gentlemen at arm's length'.⁴⁷ Yet it may be argued that rather than forgetting themselves, the rebel leaders consciously sought a position that allowed clear points of contact with the prevailing structures and myths of complaint, as these were formulated in the government-sponsored texts of the time. If we accept this then we recognise that the remarkable extent of 'feedback' between government and commons during

⁴⁶ The suggestion that 'saffren grounds' is a scribal error for 'sovereign grounds', i.e. exclusive freehold property, is suggested in D. MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', *P&P* 84 (August 1979), 53. MacCulloch also points out the origins of this article in the foldcourse system operating in east Norfolk.

⁴⁷ MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', 46–47.

Somerset's regency is not only to be detected in evangelical idiom and specific aspects of an agrarian reform programme but also in literary forms and configurations. In this way a text such as Latimer's first sermon before Edward VI can take on renewed importance since it was here that the attitude of complaint was most fully realised and traditional forms of social description most clearly transformed into a moralised struggle between rich and poor.

II.iii. A Mid-century Reaction?

On 10 September 1549, just two weeks after the Mousehold men were defeated at the hands of the Earl of Warwick, Anthony Aucher informed William Cecil that many of his fellow gentry 'think my lord's [Somerset's] grace rather to will the decay of the gentlemen than otherwise'. He went on to warn 'that under the pretence of Symplyssetie and povertie ther maye rest mouche myschyffe. So doe I feare ther dothe in these men called common welthes and there Adherents'. Aucher articulated the widely held perception that the rebels had falsely appropriated both the identity of the oppressed and the slogan of the commonwealth and that they had done so with the tacit support of the lord protector.⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the rebellion, some of those associated with the government began to sing from a very different hymn sheet. Sir John Cheke's *The hurt of sedicion*, first published in 1549, set forth a revised ideal of the

⁴⁸ Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions', 34. As two articles have made clear, Aucher was referring to the rebels in Kent, rather than the gospellers at court (B.L. Beer and R.J. Nash, 'Hugh Latimer and the Lusty Knave of Kent: The Commonwealth Movement of 1549', *BIHR* 52 (1979), 175-78; J.D. Alsop, 'Communication: Latimer, the "Commonwealth of Kent" and the 1549 Rebellions', *HJ* 28:2 (June 1985), 379-83. The confusion among historians on this point is partly attributable to Aucher's reference to 'that Common Wealth called Latimer'. As Beer and Nash have made clear, this was in fact John Latimer, a leader of the rebels in Kent, whom Somerset cultivated as a government agent. The fact that this confusion still continues, however (cf. McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.37), testifies to the links between the rhetoric of the commonwealthsmen and that of the rebels.

relationship between state and subject. Where Somerset's dialogue had conceded some initiative to the commons, Cheke's admonition insisted that 'Ther can be no just execution of lawes, reformation of fautes, geving out of commaundementes, but from the kyng'. The rebels were accused of having cloaked their own clamorous greed in the rhetoric of the common good, thinking 'their owne reason to be comune wealth, & other mens wisdom to be but dreaming'. Their attempt to keep gentlemen at arm's length was countered with the ominous reminder that 'a great sort of you more nede of one gentleman, then one gentleman of a greate sort of you'. Where Latimer had blamed the avarice of the rich for causing dearth, Cheke pointed out the loss to the realm of crops 'destroy[ed] by sedition'. Men who had once been diligent producers had proved themselves social parasites – 'nastye vagabundes, and idell loyterers' – illegitimately claiming as their 'ryght, [that which] is an other mans own'.⁴⁹

Like Aucher, Thomas Smith had experienced severe reservations concerning the wisdom of Somerset's policy and his surrounding himself with 'hotlings' who 'devise commonwealths as they list'. Smith's *Discourse of the commonweal of this realm of England*, produced in the wake of the rebellions, exemplified an important shift in the usage of commonwealth terminology from 'a medium of moral prescription or condemnation' to 'a vehicle for the discussion of policy'.⁵⁰ What is less often recognised is that it also offered an alternative model of the clergyman's response to economic change. In the text

⁴⁹ John Cheke, *The hurt of sedition, howe greveous it is to a commune welth* (1549), sigs.B3^r, B4^v, B7^r, C1^v, E8^{r-v}, F5^v, F7^r, G1^r.

⁵⁰ Bush, *Protector Somerset*, p.67; Thomas Smith, *A Discourse of the commonweal of this realm of England*, ed. E. Lamond (Cambridge, 1893); Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.154. For the treatment of Smith's *Discourse* as a rejection of the assumptions of earlier commonwealth literature see also McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, pp.52-58 and A.B. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, North Carolina, 1965), pp.287-309. The *Discourse* circulated in manuscript from 1549 and was eventually published anonymously in 1581.

the representatives of various interest groups – knight, merchant, husbandman and capper – are overseen in their discussions by a Doctor of theology.⁵¹ Rather than taking the part of the poor, this clergyman is presented as the learned voice of reason, elevated above the short-sighted complaints of the other estates. To an extent, this allows him to achieve a genuine equanimity and comprehensiveness. Thus ‘every man’, as represented by the various interest groups, is shown to be ‘naturally covetous of lucre’. But the Doctor nevertheless places himself alongside the knight in a position of authority over the commons. Modern interpretations have tended to overlook the extent to which the bulk of the discussions in the text are conducted between the knight and the Doctor. This implicit exclusion of the ‘commoner’ from the discussion of policy is made explicit when the knight, who provides the occasional narrative interpolation, describes how the Doctor ‘whispered in my eare’. Whilst the knight is permitted to remain sceptical of the Doctor’s analysis, the husbandman is made submissively grateful to the Doctor for outlining the numerous causes of dearth, ‘for youe have spoken in the mattier more then I could doe my self, and yet nothinge but that is true’. When it comes to the question of enclosures, the Doctor is most concerned with the threat to public order, or the ‘great tumult and discorde in the commonwealth’ that might come if the cottagers who depended on the commons were ‘sodenly thrust out from that commoditie’.⁵²

Aspects of this more balanced and cautious approach to social questions can be found in the sermons preached following the rebellions. In a sermon of

⁵¹ The fact that the Doctor is a representative of the clerical estate is sometimes overlooked, partly because the Doctor’s views are often thought to represent those of Smith himself (Cf. Ferguson, *Articulate Citizen*, p.294; D. Rollison, ‘Discourse and Class Struggle: The Politics of Industry in Early Modern England’, *Social History* 26:2 (May 2001), 174.

⁵² Smith, *Discourse of the commonweal*, pp.45, 50, 56.

1550, Thomas Lever is 'quite as much concerned to denounce rebellion as he is to condemn oppression'. The neglect of duties at both ends of the social scale is summed up in his observation that 'pore men have been rebels, and ryche men have not done their duetie'. The reformers were at pains to insist that the content of their message had not changed: they had always preached obedience, contentment and humility and it was the lack of learned preaching that had encouraged the people to rebel.⁵³ In reality, of course, the emphasis on obedience and patience is notable by its absence from published works pre-dating the 1549 rebellions. A 'distinct anxiety in the face of political change' may have lain behind Crowley's decision in November 1549 to turn from the emotive, supplicatory posture which he had adopted in his *Information and petition* to the more detached persona of the estates satirist in *The voyce of the last trumpet* . . . *callyng al estats of men to the ryght path of theyr vocation*. In this more comprehensive survey of sin, Crowley included a 'lesson' for the yeoman that focused on the dangers of aspirations to upward social mobility and on the need for patience in the face of oppression. Evangelicals were forced to deal with the appropriation of their rhetoric to the cause of social upheaval. The rebels were thus accused of being hypocrites or 'carnal gospellers'. Peter Martyr preached against the English commons for 'pretending zeal . . . in their lips, and not in their hearts, counterfeiting godliness in name but not in deed'.⁵⁴

A closer look at one sermon of 1550, however, reveals a continued 'bias towards the poor' within a purportedly even-handed indictment of both the rebels and the covetous enclosers. Preaching once again before the king, Latimer

⁵³ Elton, 'Reform and the 'Commonwealth-men'', p.30; Lever, *A fruitfull sermon*, sig.A8'.

⁵⁴ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.37; Crowley, 'A voyce of the last trumpet', in *Select Works*, pp.63-70; E. Shagan, *Popular Politics*, p.278.

condemned the greed of landowners who had ‘rebelled . . . agaynste the kynges commaundement, and agaynst such good order as he and hys counceyl woulde have set in the realm’. This was professedly balanced by a denunciation of violence on the part of the commons who ‘thought they had a right to the thynges that they inordinately sought to have. But what then, they must not come to it that way’. Both ‘the commons’ and ‘the gentlemen’ were therefore rebellious subjects. But the language used here undermined this apparently even-handed structure. The formula ‘But what then’, used in relation to the rights of the poor, tacitly acknowledged the entitlement of the rebels to the use of the commons, and suggested that this customary entitlement overrode the proprietorial titles of their lords. Latimer went on to suggest that any enclosures carried out since the thirteenth century were illegitimate. By the terms of statutes made during Henry III’s reign, he pointed out, landlords had ‘lefte to the tenaunts and poore commons no more in those dayes but suffycyente’. Therefore ‘if they had any more taken from theym sence that tyme, then had they now not sufficient’. Furthermore, although Latimer described covetousness – ‘an inordinate desyre to have that they had not’ – as the cause of both oppression and rebellion, he clearly wished his audience to focus on the former. When urging his fellow preachers to ‘speake agaynste Covetousnes, and crye oute upon it’, the targets he had in mind were ‘these Giauntes of Englande, these great men and men of power, these men that are oppressours of the poore’.⁵⁵

Latimer’s was only one of a number of texts that continued to focus on the sufferings of the poor at the hands of their rapacious masters. Robert Crowley’s *The way to wealth* was published in 1550 as ‘a most present remedy

⁵⁵ Latimer, *A moste faithfull sermon*, sigs.B5^r-B6^r, F6^r.

for sedition'. Like Latimer he admonished both the 'pore man of the contrey' and the 'gredie cormerauntes' but once again his apparent equanimity is undercut by his use of the language of entitlement and apportioning of blame exclusively to the rich. The poor man's disobedience originated with the 'gredie cormerauntes' who 'contrarie to the law' and 'contrarie to conscience, the ground of al good lawes' had 'enclosed frome the pore theire *due* commones'. Poor men may have 'greatly offended God by rebellion' but 'you have bene the *only cause* of theyr offence'.⁵⁶ This line of reasoning was also sustained by those most closely implicated in the government's agrarian policy. Hales countered claims that his own rhetoric as enclosure commissioner had stirred up the commons with the assertion that 'if the cause of this sedition for comens be sought and the roote founde out, it shalbe well seen, that it spryngeth of the gredynes of those men that thus do slaunder me'.⁵⁷

We must therefore recognise that in certain texts and circumstances the gossellers were capable of standing remarkably firm in continuing to lay the burden of blame for the commonwealth's ills at the feet of the rich. This posture was presented not as a matter of personal choice but as intrinsic to the preacher's vocation. Preaching to the court at Greenwich in 1552, Bernard Gilpin defended his voicing of the poor's complaint by emphasising its appropriateness to his congregation. Before the people in the country he would preach 'obedience . . . unto al that be put in authoritie over them', but before the court his duty was 'in Gods behalfe to pleade their cause'.⁵⁸ The issue to which we must now turn is the

⁵⁶ Crowley, 'The Way to Wealth, wherein is plainly taught a most present remedy for sedicion' (1550), in *Select Works*, pp.134, 144, 146 [emphasis added].

⁵⁷ 'The Defence of John Hales ageynst certeyn sclaundres and false reportes made of hym', printed in *A Discourse of the Common Weal of England*, ed. E. Lamond, pp. lvii, lviii-lix,.

⁵⁸ Bernard Gilpin, *A godly sermon preached at Greenwich the first Sondag after the Epiphanie, Anno Domini. 1552* (1581), p.49.

fate of this persona in Elizabeth's reign and beyond. Many of the later sixteenth-century sermons discussed below were also delivered in front of a metropolitan audience dominated by the economic and social elite, so in many respects we are able to compare like with like. The following section will examine the development of clerical complaint in terms of theme, tone, and authorial perspective and try and place this trajectory in the wider context of the evolution of social criticism and economic change during this period.

III SOCIAL CRITICISM AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN TUDOR-STUART PREACHING

III.i. Echoes of the Past

We do not have to look too far to find echoes of the mid-Tudor gospellers' rhetoric and concerns in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although no historian has been tempted to speak of a 'commonwealth' coalition of preachers and politicians during Elizabeth's reign, it is nevertheless widely acknowledged that 'religious moralists could still denounce covetousness with a vigour Latimer would have applauded'.⁵⁹ Many landlords continued to rack rents, convert leases and engross farms, whilst their conspicuous consumption boomed. As the effects of intensified estate-management, commerce and population growth were brought into focus by a run of poor harvests, preachers in the countryside can be seen using the familiar esoterica of agrarian complaint to comment on a new rural economic crisis. One notable example is that of Francis Trigge, rector of Welbourn in Lincolnshire. His *Godly and fruitfull*

⁵⁹ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.202.

sermon, preached at Grantham in 1592, castigated the covetousness and commercialism of landlords and rich farmers and deplored their lack of hospitality in comparison with their ancestors. The issue of enclosure loomed large in the Midlands in this period, and formed the theme of Trigge's next work, *The humble petition of two sisters; the Church and Common wealth: for the restoring of their ancient commons and liberties*. The supplicatory genre and apocalyptic rhetoric is reminiscent of Crowley's *Information and petition*, published over fifty years earlier. Indeed, Trigge firmly places himself within this tradition, not only in his introductory reminder that 'I deale with the root of all evill, covetousnesse', but also more explicitly in quoting the famous anti-enclosure polemic from book one of More's *Utopia*. More himself is described by Trigge as 'a great common-wealths man, and very expert in the lawes of England'.⁶⁰ As we shall see in later chapters, Trigge was only one of a number of Midland preachers to confront the agrarian change that was so acutely felt in this region.

The extent to which this kind of complaint was regularly heard in parish pulpits can only be guessed at, given that few parochial sermons found their way into print at this time. The manuscript sermons that do survive suggest that parish sermons did not, on the whole, engage in sustained invective against the rich.⁶¹ This is not to say that didactic texts aimed at a wide audience were free of condemnations of covetousness and oppression. Most seventeenth-century catechisms continued to insist that the eighth commandment – 'Thou shalt not steale' – referred not only to theft by 'violence, or secret taking away that which

⁶⁰ Francis Trigge, *A godly and fruitfull sermon preached at Grantham . . . 1592* (1594), sig.B2^v; Francis Trigge, *The humble petition of two sisters*, sig.A7^r.

⁶¹ I owe this observation to Arnold Hunt.

is our neighbours' but also to theft by 'oppression and tyranny of the rich towards the poor'.⁶² The Westminster Larger Catechism, first published in 1647, included 'unjust enclosures' and depopulation as examples of theft of the latter kind. John Dod and Robert Cleaver's *Plaine and familiar exposition of the Ten Commandements* (1603) also focused on the figure of the encloser in its consideration of the eighth commandment. Men who 'under pretence of a common good . . . bring to passe a common evill by getting all to themselves, & sweeping men from the earth' were described, in the familiar idiom, as 'caterpillers' of the country.⁶³

At the same time, preachers continued to counsel men in the fulfilment of their paternalistic duties. In the midst of the dearth of 1594-97 the privy council issued letters to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, calling on them to ensure that preachers throughout the realm 'exhorte men specially at this tyme to abstinence and praier, and to use all charitable devotion towards the relief of their poore neighbours both in housekeeping, setting them a worke, giving of almes and other charitable workes, and sparing other excessive and superfluous expences of vyctualles'.⁶⁴ Apart from the *Homelies to moove compassion towards the poore and needie*, only one surviving printed sermon was preached directly in response to this campaign for 'general hospitality'.⁶⁵ However, the traditional discourse of the commonwealth filtered into other texts published around this time. In a sermon preached in 1595, for example, the

⁶² John Mayer, *Mayer's catechisme abridged* (1621) sig.C4^r; I. Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford, 1996), p.462.

⁶³ *The humble advice of the assembly of divines . . . at Westminster, concerning a larger catechisme* (1648 edn.), p.102; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A plaine and familiar exposition of the Ten Commandements* (1603), p.309.

⁶⁴ APC, 1596-97, pp.383-86 (The privy council to Archbishops Whitgift and Hutton, 25 December 1596), cited in Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 44.

⁶⁵ *Three sermons, or homilies, to moove compassion towards the poore and needie in these times* (1596); Richard Curteys, *The care of a Christian conscience* (1600).

Wiltshire minister Charles Pinner urged the performance of the inescapable ‘dutie . . . of serving one another, & being common-weales men, not private-weales men’.⁶⁶

It was not only in provincial contexts and pedagogical texts that these themes continued to surface. One of the best-selling authors of the Elizabethan period was the London preacher Henry ‘silver-tongued’ Smith, in whose sermons the traditional medieval themes of avarice, lust and pride were particularly prominent. Smith combined this traditional moralising with a more recent discourse, noting in connection with the miserable state of the poor, that ‘hunger is unnaturall and an uncharitable commonwealth’.⁶⁷ The subject of avarice also proved enduringly popular at Paul’s Cross. Preaching here in 1609 on the theme of covetousness, William Whately described landlords’ racking of rents as ‘that sinne of oppression, so much spoken against, in men of this place, by Gods word’.⁶⁸ The tone for these sermons had been set at this pulpit in 1388, with Thomas Wimbleton’s sermon on Luke 16:2 – ‘Give an account of thy stewardship’. Although this offered a warning to members of all three estates to amend their lives with a view to the account to be rendered at the Day of Judgement, this sermon also foreshadowed the gospellers’ focus on the effects of covetousness on the rich and powerful.⁶⁹ Its ‘discovery’ and initial publication in

⁶⁶ Pinner, *Two sermons*, p.19. For further examples of clerical texts which ‘participated in the campaign [for general hospitality] by combining critiques of breach of hospitality with arguments for alms-giving’ see Hindle, ‘Dearth, Fasting and Alms’, 55-58.

⁶⁷ Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp.197-98; Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, pp.283-86; Henry Smith, *The poore mans teares. Opened in a sermon treating of almes deeds and releiving the poore* (1592), p.18.

⁶⁸ William Whately, *A caveat for the covetous. In a sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, the fourth of December, 1609* (1616), p.67.

⁶⁹ Thomas Wimbleton, *A sermon no lesse frutefull then famous. Made in the yeare of our Lord God. M.C. lxxxviii and founde out hyd in a wall* (1573 edn.), sigs.C2^v, C3^r-C6^v. Wimbleton used the Socratic *dictum* that the extent of covetousness and oppression meant ‘great theeves leade litle theeves to hanging’. His Day of Reckoning is populated not with poor labourers but with rulers, clergy and rich landowners.

1550 may be attributed to the renewed currency of this traditional form of complaint in the hands of the commonwealthsmen, but the fact that it was reprinted perhaps twenty times up to 1635 testifies to a continued appetite for prophetic preaching of this kind.⁷⁰

There were also echoes in this pulpit of the specifically agrarian complaint of the 1540s and 1550s. Although they preached in an urban context, some ministers evidently brought their rural experiences to the city. It seems certain that an increasing proportion of preachers here came from the ranks of the lesser clergy, beneficed outside the metropolis. Whilst only one such preacher can be identified in the period 1540 to 1570 this figure rises to twenty-seven in the period 1571 to 1603.⁷¹ Preaching in 1581, Anthony Anderson, rector of Medbourne (Leics.), described himself as ‘a poore man come oute of the Countrey’. Anderson adapted the rhetoric of agrarian complaint to address the changing focus of enclosing activity. Although he insisted that ‘rotten sheepe do over runne all’, he also denounced the ‘dyking in of groundes, suche barring menne of common righte, as the poore Cottier muste eyther begge, and bee starved, or else steale and bee hanged’.⁷²

Although this sermon was somewhat unusual among Paul’s Cross orations of this period in its focus on enclosure, covetousness in the countryside was far from exorcised from these texts. Conspicuous consumption in the form of a vogue for re-building was frequently condemned as a sign of greed. As

⁷⁰ Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp.195-96. For the argument that ‘late Tudor and early Stuart prophetic preaching was no more than an elaborate set of variations on an ancient homiletic theme’ see Walsham, *Providence*, p.284.

⁷¹ These figures are based on the ‘Register’ of Paul’s Cross sermons in Maclure, *Paul’s Cross Sermons*, pp.184-256. Of course, the comparison is somewhat skewed by the increase in the number of sermons that went into print – the principal means by which the preachers can be identified. Nevertheless, an increase in the number of provincial preachers at the Cross would certainly reflect the ‘professionalisation’ of the clergy in the later sixteenth century.

⁷² Anderson, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse*, sigs.D6^r, F3^v.

William Fisher of Ilford (Essex) put it in 1591, the ‘merciles oppressours’ had built these ‘fair houses’ with the ‘bloody sobs and sighs of their poore neighbours, whose livings they have taken over their heads, and whose livelyhoods, they have wringed out of their hands’.⁷³ This rhetoric was also important in Jacobean sermons delivered at the Cross. Perhaps the most concentrated dose was administered by Charles Richardson in his *Sermon against oppression and fraudulent dealing* of 1615. Richardson explicitly linked the sin of oppression to the rural elite, declaring that ‘this sinne is chiefly committed by cruell *Landlords*; partly, by inclosing the Commons, and decaying tillage . . . partly by racking their rents, & taking excessive fines’.⁷⁴

These themes also found their way into the verse and prose pamphlets produced in the capital. Since preaching remained ‘virtually the only vernacular prose model for secular moralists’, these texts imitated the homiletic discourse – including the structural commonplaces and authorial positioning – that flowed from the metropolitan pulpits.⁷⁵ Several of these texts focused on covetousness in the countryside. When the poet and social critic John Taylor chose to target the sins of the rich he directed his attention to the landed classes, particularly their conspicuous consumption and failure to provide hospitality on the scale of their ancestors. As Bernard Capp has suggested, ‘it may be that [Taylor’s] pride as a Londoner deterred him from prying too closely into the faults of its citizens’. In

⁷³ William Fisher, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the first Sunday after Newyeeres day, beeing the thirde day of January. 1580* (1580), sig.A8^r. Cf. Habakkuk 2:12 – ‘Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!’

⁷⁴ Charles Richardson, *A sermon against oppression and fraudulent dealing* (1615), p.10.

⁷⁵ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, p.314. Among the most prevalent structural commonplaces were the procession or chain of the Seven Deadly Sins, and Estates satire (see S. Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (London, 1983), ch.3).

the ballad 'Christmas' Lamentation' a direct link is made between a decline in hospitality and enclosure:

Houses where pleasures once did abound
Nought but a dogge and shepheard is found
Places where Christmas revells did keepe
Are now become habitations for sheepe.⁷⁶

There are echoes of Latimer's depiction of a decayed yeomanry in Thomas Lupton's *Dreame of the Divil and Dives* of 1589, in which the complaint is made that 'some so racke their rentes nowe, that the tenants are not able to keepe hospitallitie, nor releve the poore as they were wont'.⁷⁷ The lament that charity had grown cold was of course an almost obligatory component of any social criticism in this period. Several texts also reproved the increasing recourse to disciplinary measures to deal with poverty. Philip Stubbes, in his well-known *Anatomie of Abuses*, described 'the stockes and prison, with whippinge cheare now and than' as the 'best portion of almes which many Gentlemen geve'. Stubbes also employed the emotive imagery of earlier anti-enclosure tirades, writing of the 'insaciable cormorants' and 'greedie grasiers' who raked together infinite pasture so that poor men could 'hardly get a peece of ground to keepe so much as a poore cow or two upon for the maintenance of themselves, and their poore families'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ B. Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet 1578-1653* (Oxford, 1994), p.104; J.P. Collier (ed.), *A Book of Roxburghe Ballads* (London, 1847), p.13.

⁷⁷ Thomas Lupton, *A dreame of the devill and Dives, most terrible and fearefull to the servants of Sathan, but right comfortable and acceptable to the chyl dren of God* ([1584]), sigs.D6^{r-v}.

⁷⁸ Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses: containing, a discoverie, or briefe summarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many countreyes of the world: but (especiall ye) in a famous ilande called Ailgna* (1583), sigs.C2^r, C5^r.

III.ii. Narrowing the agenda?

Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses*, first published in 1583, is often used as a reference point for historians seeking to trace the transition from the traditional complaint of medieval preaching to the literature of the puritan reformation of manners. This is the sort of text Wrightson presumably has in mind when he refers to texts of the 1580s that confronted the 'iniquities of the rich and powerful', prior to the contraction of reformation of manners literature into what was effectively an attack on the poor.⁷⁹ In Martin Ingram's analysis, on the other hand, Stubbes' work is seen as an eclectic compound of the past and present agendas of ubiquitous 'reformations of manners'. Ingram is also more wary of accepting the concept of a 'narrowing' of the agenda in the moralistic literature of the seventeenth century. Whilst issues such as usury and covetousness 'had by the end of Elizabeth's reign largely disappeared from the agenda of legal regulation', they remained 'to some extent moral issues'.⁸⁰ In other words, there is a distinction to be made between the *legislative* agenda of reformation of manners and the *literature* of complaint. According to Margaret Spufford, religious belief is a 'gigantic red herring' in explaining the legislative focus on social discipline. The desire for social control stemmed instead, Spufford believes, from recurring moments of economic crisis that afflicted the population of the thirteenth century as much as that of late Elizabethan England.⁸¹ Other scholars have focused on the literature of late sixteenth-century complaint, detecting within this the gradual transition to new standards of morality. Alexandra Walsham, for example, has

⁷⁹ Wrightson, 'Postscript: Terling Revisited', p.211n.

⁸⁰ Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners', pp.69-71.

⁸¹ M. Spufford, 'Puritanism and Social Control?', in A.J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.41-57.

reinterpreted aspects of Stubbes' critique of pride – including his attacks on enclosure – as a distinct hangover from an earlier age of complaint. The *Anatomie* 'lies in limbo', Walsham suggests, between two ethical codes: the 'older schema' of the Seven Deadly Sins and the 'alternative moral system' of the Decalogue. The latter, as John Bossy has cogently argued, gave greater importance to offences against God, treating false worship as 'the primary offence of Christians, and other offences as contingent upon that'.⁸² By implication, therefore, the texts that express the true tenor of 'Elizabethan clerical complaint' are those that targeted manifestations of spiritual apostasy and idolatry.

There is certainly no shortage of texts that testify to this gear-change in the moral history of Europe. By the end of the sixteenth century, the fourth commandment had come to be interpreted in Calvinist circles as 'a charter for strict sabbatarianism'.⁸³ Practical concerns among puritan preachers had helped to sow the seeds for this development in the 1570s and 1580s. The 'barrage of fulmination' in the pulpit at Paul's Cross against plays and theatre-going was part of a struggle for supremacy between two rival providers in the 'leisure industry'. These puritan polemics were thus designed both as an appeal to the godly to distance themselves from the playhouse and as a means of preventing the player

⁸² Walsham, 'Glose of Godlines', p.193; J. Bossy, 'Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments', in E. Leites (ed.), *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.214-34.

⁸³ Bossy, 'Moral Arithmetic', p.229. Nicholas Bownd's *The doctrine of the Sabbath, plainely layde forth, and soundly proved by testimonies both of holy scripture, and also of olde and new ecclesiasticall writers*, published in 1595, crystallised two decades of debate over the binding force of Mosaic law on the Christian's life. Its fruits can be seen in Dod and Cleaver's *Exposition on the Ten Commandments*, with its extreme assertion that the fourth commandment was morally and perpetually binding. For a full discussion of the development of this theologically distinct sabbatarian doctrine see P. Collinson, 'The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism', reprinted in Collinson, *Godly People*, pp.429-43.

encroaching on the preacher's role of 'moral censor and guide'.⁸⁴ In fact the two decades between 1570 and 1590 saw the largest number of 'single-issue' texts directed against both 'pleasures and pursuits of a non-traditional, non-communal kind' and traditional rural pursuits such as fairs or may games.⁸⁵ In this sense, the reformation of manners literature could be as 'narrow' in its focus in the 1570s and 1580s as it supposedly was by the middle of the seventeenth century. It is fair to say, however, that the foundations of a more focused attempt to impose a 'culture of discipline', in particular the regulation of aspects of personal conduct such as drunkenness and swearing, were only really laid around the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thus in 1604 one writer could declare that since the disease of ignorance was now 'almost cured', preachers could begin to focus on the 'reformation of manners and not wholly in these daies spende our studies and labours against errour in doctrine'.⁸⁶

To what extent, then, did this pursuit of reformation of manners turn puritan preachers into agents of social control? It is difficult to address this question without briefly considering the place and power of the pulpit. William Hunt has emphasised the primary agency of the preacher in 'effecting' a reformation of manners by linking 'immiserating vice, especially drunkenness and lechery, with damnation, thereby enforcing the culture of discipline with the most frightful of sanctions'. Wrightson echoes this argument, insisting that the radical pulpit often directly inspired the petitions from parish elites to

⁸⁴ Maclure, *Paul's Cross Sermons*, p.139; Lake, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p.430. Cf. the comments of Stephen Gosson in *Plays confuted in five actions* (1582): 'the rebuking of manners is as fit for the stage, as the picture of chastity for the stews' (Cited in Lake, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p.441).

⁸⁵ P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford, 1982), p.221; Hutton, *Merry England*, p.132. See, for example, Christopher Fetherston's *Dialogue against light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing* (1582) and Thomas Wilcox's *Glasse for gamesters* (1581).

⁸⁶ Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, p.79; Jeremy Corderoy, *A Short dialogue, wherein is proved, that no man can bee saved without good workes* (Oxford, 1604), sig.A10^v.

magistrates.⁸⁷ In an urban context, ministers in towns with a single parish 'could sometimes dominate, and determine policy'.⁸⁸ On the other hand, a narrow application of the reformation of manners, focusing on vagrants and the disorderly poor, was often due less to the vision of the town preacher, than to the practical concerns of urban authorities about the need for social order.⁸⁹

Whilst its responsibility for the shape of policy and practice was mediated by more pragmatic concerns, therefore, the pulpit was undoubtedly capable of raising the ethical bar to an exacting standard in the process of addressing real social concerns. These concerns were not, as Spufford has implied, merely a recurring response to economic crises. Rather, they testify to the 'vivid awareness of critical circumstances' that was integral to the puritan mentality. As Wrightson has argued, 'social and religious anxieties interacted, the one informing the development of the other'.⁹⁰ We should be wary, however, of assuming that these texts were consciously structured to fulfil an agenda of correcting 'non-respectable society'. For one thing, it is increasingly clear that rather than being a manifestation of ingrained hostility towards the mass of the parishioners, 'this literature of diatribe was *missionary* in intent'. Moreover, the claim to be speaking up for the poor remained a vital source of moral authority and rhetorical effectiveness in these texts. This explains a marked reluctance to limit the definition of the immoral 'multitude' to the poor and disreputable.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, p.82; K. Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660', in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), p.19.

⁸⁸ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.39. Cf., for example, A. Hughes, 'Religion and Society in Stratford on Avon 1619-1638', *Midland History* 19 (1994), 58-84.

⁸⁹ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.47; I. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.249-50, 253, 256.

⁹⁰ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.34; Wrightson, 'Postscript: Terling Revisited', pp.204-05.

⁹¹ Duffy, 'The Godly and the Multitude', 33, 36-37; Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p.202.

In fact, it was the rich who were often found most guilty in relation to the sins of drunkenness, swearing or even idleness. In this way, criticisms of contemporary manners and morals saw preachers and pamphleteers manipulating the conventions of a much older tradition of complaint. A classic single-issue text against the evils of drunkenness, for example, is Richard Rawlidge's *A monster late found out . . . or The scourging of tipplers* (1628). In this treatise Rawlidge adopted the traditional imagery of the poor confronting the rich at the Day of Judgement but applied it to alehousekeepers and their customers:

What a miserable, lamentable, and wretched case will you bee in, when you shall bee arraigned before the Lord our God: and so many poore men, women, and children, shall there stand to witnes against you, with their complaints, that they have perished for want of bread, because you have suffered and kept them night and day, swilling and drinking all they had in your houses.⁹²

This imagery retained its currency because preachers rarely limited their diatribes against drunkenness to its effects on the individual. Preaching at Paul's Cross, Thomas Adams described how dearth and the subsequent distress of the poor had its ultimate origins in drink:

Drunkenness makes so quick riddance of the ale that this raiseth the price of malt, and the good sale of malt raiseth the price of barley; thus is the land distressed, and the poor's bread dissolved into the drunkard's cup, the markets are hoised up. If the poor cannot reach the price, the

⁹² Richard Rawlidge, *A monster late found out and discovered. Or The scourging of tiplers, the ruine of Bacchus, and the bane of tapsters . . . with an easie way to reforme all such disorders* (1628), sig.E1^v. For more on the Day of Judgement imagery see below pp.112-13.

maltmaster will; he can utter it to the taphouse, and the taphouse is sure of her old friend, drunkenness.⁹³

Discussions of the sin of idleness could also be framed by traditional imagery of oppression. Thomas Scott's *Belgicke pismire* (1622) made an unfavourable comparison between the industry and good government of Dutch cities and the corruption of the English commonwealth by the sin of sloth. This evil was most apparent, however, among 'Improvers of Land', bred from 'the lazie scumme of counterfeyt Gentilitie'. The miserable state of cottagers in the Highlands was not due, as Scott had first assumed, to the 'lazier disposition of the commons' but to the 'idle course' of the 'lordly Owner'.⁹⁴ This is not to say that every preacher in every circumstance drew the rich into the sins that were, in practice, associated with the poor. These examples suggest, nevertheless, that despite having as its reference point the ideal standards of the Bible, the 'traditional' genre of complaint was not as static as some scholars would like us to believe.⁹⁵

IV DEVELOPMENT OF A DISCOURSE: CLERICAL COMPLAINT c.1580- c.1640

The potential for seventeenth-century social criticism to adapt the idiom and structures of an earlier age has not gone unrecognised in current scholarship. Andrew McRae has briefly touched on two examples of such criticism, commenting that they show how some clergy 'recognized a need to update and

⁹³ Cited in Maclure, *Paul's Cross Sermons*, p.137.

⁹⁴ Scott, *The Belgicke pismire*, pp.22, 27, 32, 90, 95. For a similar depiction of the idle *rentier* gentry see Capp, *John Taylor*, p.101.

⁹⁵ Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, pp.7-10.

elaborate the moral imperatives of complaint'.⁹⁶ The remainder of this chapter will expand upon this, arguing that rather than a 'narrowing' of the focus of moral concern, we can witness in these later texts wide-ranging developments of the *topoi* and structures associated with traditional complaint. These developments can all be considered as responses to economic change and to the evolution of a distinct protestant identity.

IV.i. A Voice in the Wilderness? The Shifting Locus of Moral Authority

Before going any further, we must consider the arguments surrounding the changing status of the pulpit at this time. In the early years of Edward VI's reign the pulpit, or rather the mode of complaint closely associated with it, was a privileged site of moral authority. The subject matter, colloquial idiom and prophetic rhetoric of these texts were shared with official proclamations, poetry or pamphlets and with the grievances of popular protest. Contemporaries created a mythology around the central figures among the gospellers that emphasised the forcefulness of their preaching. Nicholas Ridley described how Latimer and his fellow preachers proved unpopular with magistrates, since 'their tongues were so sharp, they ripped in so deep in their galled backs, to have purged them . . . of insatiable covetousness . . . of intolerable ambition and pride'.⁹⁷

By the late sixteenth century, however, the privileged moral authority of the pulpit was threatened by the rediscovery of an alternative tradition of social commentary. The 1570s and 80s, it has been suggested, were a transitional phase

⁹⁶ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.76. The texts considered by McRae are Thomas Carew's 'Caveat for clothiers' [considered below, p.103] and Charles Fitz-Geffry's *Curse for corn-hoarders* [considered below, ch.4, pp.249-50].

⁹⁷ *The Works of Nicholas Ridley*, ed. H. Christmas (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1843), pp.58-59.

between the ages of a native tradition of ‘complaint’ and a classical tradition of ‘satire’. By the time of the verse satires of Joseph Hall – the self-proclaimed ‘first English Satyrist’ – in the 1590s, these texts were beginning to be consciously constructed according to the most exacting standards of classical imitation. The satirist in this mould commonly eschewed ‘the privilege of moral rebuke’ and laughed at the folly of sin rather than weeping at its tragic consequences or pleading for reformation on behalf of the poor.⁹⁸ Because metropolitan satirists such as Thomas Nashe were able to portray their own problematic experience with London’s demi-monde, they helped prepare ‘a new generation for the complexities of moral choice’ they would encounter. Their moral cues may have come from the preacher but their liminal status meant they were able to guide the individual through this world of deceit, cunning and hypocrisy. Their subject matter differed, too. Where complaint focused on the manifestations of sins and apostasy and their impact on an idealised community, satire’s attentions were devoted to prying into the conscience and motivations of the individual.⁹⁹

Where then did these developments leave the moral authority of the preacher? In addressing this question we will focus on the sermons delivered at Paul’s Cross, a central site of moral and social criticism, from which a large number of printed sermons survive. Manley insists that the self-styled status of metropolitan sermons as ‘discursive service to the authority of the sword’ made it impossible for these texts to confront the paradoxes and contradictions that were revealed in the traditional structure of society during a time of rapid social

⁹⁸ Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, pp.109, 135-40; McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.84.

⁹⁹ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, chs.6-7, quoting from pp.299, 315, 393.

change. Preachers of the Paul's Cross 'jeremiad' saw only sinfulness and the necessary destruction that would be visited on the city if these 'monstrous' aberrations were allowed to continue. By contrast, late sixteenth-century pamphleteers presented a city that had adapted its natural rhythms to the inevitability of sinfulness in all ranks of men.¹⁰⁰ There are two weaknesses in Manley's argument that are germane in the present context. Firstly, there is no acknowledgement that pulpit discourse might develop in ways that corresponded with literary trends, particularly in a focus on the individual mind. Secondly, Manley offers little sense of the complex identities through which audiences made sense of their experiences. Apart from the self-identified godly, most people, as Pete Lake has argued, were used to compartmentalising their 'Christian' and 'worldly' selves. They habitually distinguished between the usurer, whore and papist without and within, looking on the former with disgust but tolerating or even cultivating the latter. In moments of crisis, however, large numbers of people might tune back into the godly pulpit, which would undermine this neat distinction and attempt to enforce a homogenisation of these two identities. Thus where Manley regards the godly pulpit as essentially ephemeral to the priorities and practice of people's lives, Lake seeks to explain its continued popularity with reference to a widely-felt need for a coherent explanation of 'inherently contingent' events such as plague or dearth.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, ch.6, quoting from p.314.

¹⁰¹ Lake, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp.472-73.

IV.ii. The Moral force of Clerical Complaint: The Topos of Hypocrisy

As Lake has reminded us, it was precisely the 'transition' from a compartmentalised to a self-critical and introspective identity that a preacher like Thomas Adams was trying to effect in *The white devill*, a Paul's Cross sermon published in 1613. This address to the respectable citizens of London focused on the evil of hypocrisy, which Adams described as a 'stawking horse for covetousness'. He exhorted his audience thus:

Your zeal goes through the world, you worthy citizens. Who builds hospitals? The city. Who is liberal to the distressed gospel? The city. Who is ever faithful to the crown? The city. Beloved, your works are good; oh, but do not lose their reward through hypocrisy. . . . You lose all your goodness if your hearts be not right. The ostentation of man shall meet with the detestation of God. . . . You lose your charity whiles you give glossingly, illiberally, too late. Not a window you have erected but must bear your arms but some of you rob Peter to pay Paul; take tenths from the church and give not the poor the twentieths of them. It is not seasonable, nor reasonable charity to undo whole towns by your usuries, enclosings, oppressions, impropriations, and for a kind of expiation to give three or four the yearly pension of twenty marks. An almshouse is not so big as a village, nor thy superfluity, whereout thou givest, like their necessity, whereout thou extortest. He is but poorly charitable that having made a hundred beggars, relieves two.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Thomas Adams, *The white devil, or, The hypocrite uncased in a sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, March 7. 1612* (1615 edn.), pp.35-36.

A change is apparent here from mid-Tudor complaint. A popular rebellion that tainted the true protestant faith with sedition had encouraged the identification of the hypocritical Christian with the seditious commons.¹⁰³ As the protestant church became established as an orthodox and powerful institution, however, the figure of the hypocrite or ‘carnal gospeller’ came to be identified more frequently with the uncharitable rich. In late sixteenth-century texts protestants were accused of lacking the ‘holy zeale, and burning charitie which our forefathers had’, and which men in an age of prosperity, illuminated by the light of the gospel, should have striven to surpass.¹⁰⁴ Adams’ critique represents a development of these admonitions in line with the increased theological emphasis on the individual’s obligations to God. This appeal to the conscience meant that hypocrisy could be uncovered without nostalgic reference to a popish past.

Like a number of late Elizabethan and Jacobean Paul’s Cross sermons, therefore, Adams’ text is more intensely focused on the tribulations of the private conscience than on any threat to idealised social relations. A closer look at his treatment of the theme of hypocrisy, however, reveals that he firmly placed this individual within a ‘social’ context of public estimation and criticism. In anti-puritan polemic the covetousness, lust and ambition of the puritan hypocrite was cloaked under an outward show of exaggerated physical gesture and pietistic verbal formulae.¹⁰⁵ In Adams’ text, by contrast, the ‘stalking horse’ for

¹⁰³ See above, p.68.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence Chaderton, *An excellent and godly sermon*, sigs.C5^{r-v}; Philip Stubbes, *A motive to good workes. Or rather, to true Christianitie* (1593), p.86.

¹⁰⁵ For the rise of anti-puritan literature in the wake of the Martin Marprelate pamphlets see Lake, *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, ch.13. Lake distinguishes between the ‘downmarket’ (exemplified in Nashe’s pamphlets) and ‘upmarket’ (exemplified in the sermons of Richard Bancroft and Mathew Sutcliffe) forms of this genre. Although the latter used the *topos* of hypocrisy in an attack on the political threat of presbyterianism, much of their polemical relish was saved for the private conduct of puritans. Outside the capital, sermons on the theme of hypocrisy were

covetousness is constructed out of material displays of piety: hospitals; endowments; church repairs; and almshouses. These were then spatially and numerically contrasted with the villages and livelihoods destroyed by greed and oppression. What Adams therefore offered both to his congregation and to the readers of any of the five editions of this popular text, was an interpretation of these distinctively protestant manifestations of charity as themselves potential signifiers of hypocrisy. This was an interpretation that sat uncomfortably with the epideictic rhetoric associated with the sermons and monuments that celebrated the charitable activity of the city elite.¹⁰⁶

Of course, Adams' development of the *topos* of hypocrisy was clearly constructed for a particular occasion and audience. It would be misleading to suggest that later protestant considerations of hypocrisy were directed *exclusively* towards rich 'professors'. This impression may be gained partly because so many printed sermons are those preached before largely elite congregations. Adams' sermon should not be read merely as proof that Jacobean clerics were as capable as the mid-Tudor preachers of expounding the gospel of social justice. Instead, we should recognise that Adams' ability to adapt this rhetoric to the changed circumstances in which he preached meant that his exhortation was more than a mere voice in the wilderness.

This invites us to consider the potential effects of this preaching on its audience. Arnold Hunt has recently suggested that the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Paul's Cross preacher should be regarded as an influential

preached both by 'puritans' such as Samuel Hieron (*The discoverie of hypocrisie* (1609)) and by 'conformists' such as Robert Wakeman (*The true professor. Opposed against the formall hypocrites of these times. A sermon preached at Salt-ash in Cornwall. July 15. 1620* (1620)).

¹⁰⁶ I. Archer, 'The Nostalgia of John Stow', in D.L. Smith, R. Strier and D. Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge, 1995), p.30.

voice shaping the reputation and even the policies of the London magistracy. The ubiquitous preaching on the subject of usury, for example, commonly linked this sin explicitly with the magistracy. This struck at the heart of a paternalistic self-image, so that an attack on usury was effectively an attack on magisterial weakness in general, including the failure to punish other sins in the city. The preacher's capacity to manipulate commonplace denunciations in order to invite his audience to infer more specific or far-reaching criticisms will be crucial to the argument of the following chapter. In the present context, the evidence of controversial preaching reminds us that preachers consciously played on their congregation's concern for their reputation as godly magistrates and remained perfectly capable of causing offence to their social superiors.¹⁰⁷

Other historians have paid more attention to the unintended effects of this preaching. Lake has concluded that the 'increasingly stylised and commodified modes of loathing and denouncing' in Paul's Cross sermons actually served to domesticate stock figures such as the usurer and helped contemporaries to accommodate themselves to an increasingly commercialised urban landscape.¹⁰⁸ Although this interpretation accords significant agency to the preacher as a cultural interpreter of economic change, it very much underplays his importance as a purposeful social critic. Lake's treatment of the Paul's Cross jeremiad nevertheless offers an important re-evaluation of the putative distinction between criticism of the 'iniquities of the rich' and the censure of personal conduct. He reads the prophetic texts of this genre as elaborations on a number of synecdoches or types – principally the usurer, the whore and the papist – that

¹⁰⁷ A. Hunt, 'Criticism and Controversy' (Unpublished Paper). I am grateful to Arnold Hunt for allowing me to read this important work in advance of publication.

¹⁰⁸ Lake, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, pp.478-79.

personified contemporary anxieties about social change. The ‘quotidian or social sins of the city’ such as card-playing and theatre-going, on which so much scholarly attention has been lavished, were in fact presented as mere symptoms of the deeper corruptions of covetousness or pride, lust, and prodigality. In this way, preachers established equivalence between the sins characteristic of the city’s demi-monde and those that resided in the houses of citizens and magistrates.¹⁰⁹ This interpretation forces further questioning of the supposed ‘narrowing’ of focus in the reformation of manners literature. Admittedly Lake’s analysis focuses only on one sub-genre, but it nevertheless shows that certain criticisms, which might seem to relate to a drive for social control, were in fact part of a much more broadly applicable narrative of human sinfulness.

IV.iii. Commonwealth in Microcosm: The Sins of the City

In one sense, however, the Paul’s Cross sermon may indeed be considered ‘narrow’ in its moral focus. Hunt suggests that these sermons had become, by the late sixteenth century at least, distinctively ‘London’ occasions, both celebrations and recriminations of the civic community and its leaders. Behind the effectiveness of the preacher’s critique lay an entirely traditional conception of the ideal commonwealth as a tightly knit community in which rich and poor were mutually dependent, but the boundaries of this moral community were the city’s walls rather than the nation’s shores. The stock figure of the city usurer and the use of mercantile analogies suggest that preachers were adapting their rhetoric to the priorities and concerns of a city elite, who not only formed the core of the

¹⁰⁹ Lake, *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, pp.344-45.

sermons' audience but also, from the 1590s, provided much of the necessary financial support.¹¹⁰ In 1550 Latimer had compared the church militant to 'Gods field', in which the preacher effected 'church ploughing' whilst the ploughman provided the equally important 'bodely ploughing'. In 1613 William Pemberton compared the same church to 'a great Citie, and a place of great *Trafique* and *Merchandize*: all the *Citizens* whereof having received, from the Lord, their number of *talents*, are become *Merchants*, or traders, in one kinde or other'.¹¹¹ Daniel Price's sermon *The marchant* was preached prior to Bartholomew fair in 1607. Price attributed his focus on this profession to the fact that 'their trade of life is more honourable than others among men'. Price substituted the language of commerce for Latimer's idiom of rural labour: the worldly merchant was exhorted to 'forsake all his pleasures, al his delights, al his follie, al his vanity, al his sin and iniquitie to obtaine Christ . . . for a greater Commoditie . . . so much is the gaine in the exchange'.¹¹²

Preachers were unable, however, to contain the sins of the city élite within an exclusively urban environment. The historiographical emphasis on the metropolitan focus of the Paul's Cross jeremiad has obscured the extent to which these sermons continued to register the interconnections between town and country. Preachers such as Richardson, Whately and Jeremiah Dyke, who relied heavily on the imagery of agrarian oppression, remind us that there remained a moral imperative to address the sins of the wider commonwealth, even in front of

¹¹⁰ Hunt, 'Criticism and Controversy'.

¹¹¹ Latimer, 'A notable sermon', in Latimer, *27 sermons*, ed. Augustine Bernher (1571), fo.12^r; William Pemberton, *The godly merchant, or the great gaine. A sermon preached at Paules Crosse. Octob. 17. 1613* (1613), p.2.

¹¹² Daniel Price, *The marchant. A sermon preached at Paules Crosse on Sunday the 24. of August, being the day before Bartholomew faire. 1607* (Oxford, 1608), p.500. For the emergence in the Elizabethan period of more positive views of the merchant and mercantile activity see L. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge, 1984).

an audience of merchants and aldermen. It was certainly easier to present a polarised image of oppressed and oppressor within the context of the hierarchical manorial community than in the urban world in which power was more diffuse. It is perhaps for this reason that Richardson only mentioned in passing '*our cutthroate usurers, our blood-sucking brokers, our griping extortioners*', whom he claimed 'have beene so often cryed out upon, both here and in other places, as there is now no hope of their reformation'. Similarly, despite describing covetousness as a 'universall plague from which no sort is free', Dyke focused almost exclusively on its manifestation among the powerful. To illustrate its social consequences he drew on traditional imagery such as 'the poore Tenant . . . racked to maintaine the Landlords dogs'. In contrast, the complexity of urban life spilled out of this governing structure of powerful and powerless: 'It were endlesse', Dyke declared, 'to follow covetousnesse into every shop and profession'.¹¹³ This traditional homiletic structure therefore imposed certain limitations on the preacher's ability to picture the dilemmas faced by his audience in their everyday commercial relationships. Simultaneously, however, it allowed for a consideration of a topic central to many of these sermons: the power of the laity and ecclesiastical hierarchy over the lesser clergy, through impropriations and patronage.

¹¹³ Richardson, *A sermon against oppression*, p.15; Jeremiah Dyke, *A counterpoison against covetousness* (1619), pp.39, 45, 57. This focus stands in contrast to many of the Elizabethan and early Stuart pamphleteers who adapted the hierarchic distinctions of the medieval estates form to focus on 'a survey of mainly middle-class professions' (Clark, *Elizabethan Pamphleteers*, p.142).

IV.iv. Church and Commonwealth: The Distribution of Wealth and Power

This traditional polarised structure of complaint continued to influence the way in which clerics dealt with the balance of power between their own estate and that of laymen. The fate of the abbey lands in the 1540s was not forgotten. Indeed, it helped foment suspicion among presbyterian clergy such as Cartwright about the motives of their professed lay supporters. Bancroft exploited this fault line between the presbyterian clergy and laity in his famous anti-puritan sermon preached at Paul's Cross in 1589:

Whilest they heare us speake against Bishops and Cathedrall Churches (saith the author of the Ecclesiasticall Discipline) it tickleth their eares, looking for the like praie they had before of Monasteries: yea they have in their harts devoured alreadie the churches inheritaunce. They care not for religion, so they may get the spoile. . . . And whereas you have alreadie in your hands many impropriations & other church livings: they saie that in keeping them you sinne against your owne consciences'.¹¹⁴

Some twenty years later, Bancroft attempted to persuade parliament to raise a subsidy in order to buy up impropriations. Like Archbishop Laud, however, he was to discover that such reforms came too close to an attack on fundamental property rights.¹¹⁵ An ideal commonwealth such as that devised by Robert Burton in his *Anatomy of melancholy*, might imagine a polity entirely free of impropriations, but many preachers did little more than pass the initiative for

¹¹⁴ Richard Bancroft, *A sermon preached at Paul's Cross the 9. of Februarie, being the first Sunday in the Parliament, Anno. 1588* (1589), pp.26-27.

¹¹⁵ Hill, *Economic Problems*, ch.6 (esp. pp.149-52), pp.264-65.

amelioration to king or parliament.¹¹⁶ Some godly preachers pursued the theme that impropriations were an affront to the conscience but there is an air of resignation to these complaints: 'I know I do but beate the ayre', admitted Dyke, having urged that impropriations be 'canvassed in the Court of conscience'.¹¹⁷

If the clergy were somewhat cautious in discussing the rights and wrongs of impropriations, they were more forthright in lamenting the condition of their profession. Here preachers combined the stance and structures of traditional complaint with an idiom that had greater currency in a more commercial world. In Latimer's sermons, as we have seen, the fate of the minister became intimately linked to the experience of the poor. The inadequate income of some of the lesser clergy – 'of thys pension he is not able to by him bokes, nor geve hys neyghboure dryncke' – was thus laid at the feet of the 'grasiers, inclosers and renterearers'.¹¹⁸ The rhetorical positioning of the cleric among the poor is also apparent in later protestant sermons. '[U]nder the name of the poore', declared Adam Hill in 1593, are meant the ministers of God, the poore scholars which are the seede plot of the Church, poore soldiers, poore impotent men, as Lazarus was, sicke men, prisoners and banished men'. Dyke described the cleric suffering under a covetous impropriator as 'the poore Lazarus of the Gospell'. John Howson, in his potent sermon against simony, urged the magistrate to 'cut off this scandall' and make 'rich patrones who are . .

¹¹⁶ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy . . . by Democritus Junior. With a satyricall preface, conducing to the following discourse* (Oxford, 1621), pp.56-61; W.J. Sheils, 'Profits, Patronage and Pastoral Care: The Rectory Estates of the Archbishopric of York, 1540-1640', in O'Day and Heal (eds.), *Princes and Paupers*, p.97; William Crashaw, *The sermon preached at the Crosse, Feb. xiiii. 1607 . . . wherein, this point is principally intended; that the religion of Rome, as now it stands established, is still as bad as ever it was* (1609), p.168; Thomas Jackson, *Londons new-yeeres gift. Or The uncouching of the foxe. A godly sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, the first of Januarie. 1608* (1609), fo.26^v; Richardson, *A sermon against oppression*, p.8.

¹¹⁷ Dyke, *A counterpoison against covetousnesse*, p.56.

¹¹⁸ Latimer, *Seven Sermons*, p.40.

. equall, nay superiour in offending, and sinne only through covetousnes' equal in law 'with the poore Priest, who is tempted to Simonie by extreme necessitie'. Howson also manipulated the more general precepts of commonwealth rhetoric, transposing the language used to express both the ideal and the corrupted relationship between rich and poor onto the relationship between laity and clergy. The selling of spiritual livings was said to take away 'the society and fellowship of mankinde, wherein consisteth a Common-wealth'. The familiar image of the rich devouring the poor was applied to the lay and clerical estates: 'when one State eateth up another, it bringeth forth a monstrous and unnatuall state in the common-wealth'.¹¹⁹ At the same time, these texts demonstrate how this complaint might be developed and adapted by the integration of the idiom of equitable exchange. Thus Howson, following the precept of Romans 15:27, insisted that 'if Gentlemen be partakers of their *spirituall things*, they must *administer to them worldly things*'. 'If we sow spirituall things', demanded Dyke, 'what right, what reason hath Covetousnesse to thrust her sickle into our harvest, and to reape our temporall things?'¹²⁰

IV.v. Commonwealth Redefined: Confronting and Constructing Economic Change

This depiction of the relationship between the lay and clerical estates in the terms which governed interactions on the market testifies to the more complex

¹¹⁹ Adam Hill, *The crie of England. A sermon preached at Paules Crosse . . . 1593* (1595), pp.72-73; Dyke, *A counterpoison against covetousnesse*, p.55; John Howson, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 4. of December. 1597 Wherein is discoursed, that all buying and selling of spirituall promotion is unlawfull* (1597), pp.32-33.

¹²⁰ Howson, *A sermon preached at Paul's Cross*, p.33; Dyke, *A counterpoison against covetousnesse*, p.56. The text of Romans 15:27 runs as follows: 'For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things'.

economic environment faced by the Elizabethan and early Stuart clergy. Whilst these changes were brought particularly sharply into focus in the metropolis, their effects were of course felt much more widely. At this point, therefore, the field of enquiry will expand outwards from Paul's Cross sermons to encompass a wider selection of clerical sermons and treatises and to consider in more detail the place of sermons in the cultural interpretation of economic change.

The expansion of the market ran in parallel with the development of a new idiom that facilitated and validated commercial transactions. This discourse was constructed around concepts that celebrated productivity and profit, or, in contemporary parlance, the virtues of 'improvement', 'thrift' and 'good husbandry'. It represented a fracturing of the social vision espoused by the mid-Tudor commonwealthsmen, as the pursuit of 'commodity' was invested with positive moral value. Many preachers therefore found themselves confronted by a 'cogent rival version of moral economics', which laid the same claim to virtuous ends in the name of the commonwealth and found its ethical basis in alternative readings of Scripture.¹²¹ Where the mid-Tudor gospeller had helped to construct and perpetuate the close link between religious and economic reform, therefore, the late Elizabethan preacher might find the language of the gospel turned against his moralised economic vision. Covetousness was increasingly seen as being 'cloaked' in 'Goodly words & faire pretences', to the extent that enclosers could claim their actions 'will be for the good of the common-weale, and of the inhabitants, this will prevent much strife and contention, when things be parted, and every man knowes his owne'. Francis Trigge was among several preachers to deplore the fact that 'Inclosers allege that saying of the gospell, *Is it*

¹²¹ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.78.

not lawfull for me to doe with mine owne as I list? [Matthew 20:15] They must remember, that parable represents unto us that great Landlord of all Landlords, the King of heaven; he may say so only, and none else'.¹²² Some fifty years after this attack on individualist discourse, another Lincolnshire minister, John Moore, was engaged in a polemical battle with his neighbour, the Rev. Joseph Lee, over the morality of enclosure. In *The crying sin of England, of not caring for the poor* (1653), Moore cast enclosing as the ultimate uncharitable act carried out by men 'that care not how many *Beggars* they make, so themselves may be *Gentlemen*; nor how many poor they make, so themselves may be rich'. Lee, by contrast, offered a detailed, considered analysis of the economic benefits to be gained from farming in severalty and argued for the compatibility of the 'advancement of private persons' with the 'advantage of the publick'. Common fields, argued Lee, were not only inefficient but also a danger to the social order. 'God is the God of order', he declared, 'and order is the soul of things, the life of a Common-wealth: but common fields are the seat of disorder, the seed plot of contention, the nursery of beggary'.¹²³

The hostile positions of Moore and Lee are often regarded as emblematic of the two antagonistic camps into which economic thought had divided by the mid-seventeenth century. In this analysis, 'the tide was running strongly against' Moore, whilst his neighbour captured the 'profound transformation of values [that] was in the making'.¹²⁴ It is impossible to deny the

¹²² Dod and Cleaver, *A plaine and familiar exposition*, p.309; Trigge, *The humble petition of two sisters*, sig.C8^r.

¹²³ John Moore, *The crying sin of England, of not caring for the poor* (1653), p.7; Joseph Lee, *A vindication of a regulated enclosure* (1656), pp.22-23, Lee, *A vindication of the considerations concerning common-fields and inclosures* (1656), p.42. Cf. also John Moore, *A scripture-word against inclosure* (1656) and Joseph Lee, *Considerations concerning common fields and inclosures* (1654).

¹²⁴ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.212; Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, p.63. See also McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, pp.77-78.

contrast in tone and perspective between the texts of these two clergymen and the widespread support for Lee's views in parliament and beyond. More problematic is the impression of the character and development of economic thought that is created by focusing on these two starkly opposing models. Outside of the polemical context in which these texts were framed, the values inherent in their two visions could in fact be reconfigured and adapted to co-exist within a single text. The language of thrift, order and improvement that infused Lee's texts, moreover, could be appropriated to different ends and effectively combined with more traditional ethical imperatives. Contemporaries recognised that 'names and words play fast and loose, and so the definition must varie, according to the latitude of the words'.¹²⁵ Even the most emotive terminology, therefore, was invested with sufficient 'latitude' to be reconciled with traditionally opposing concepts. 'Commonwealth' and 'commodity', for example, were only opposites insofar as one was considered public and the other private. It was possible, however, to conceive of the 'commoditie of the whole body in generall' and thereby to incorporate the attainment of *collective* commodity (or profit) into a traditional description of the commonwealth. In *The golden grove* (1600), William Vaughan described the 'Common-wealth' as 'a societie of free-men united together by a general consent, to the end to live well and orderly, not onely in regard of justice, but also of commoditie'. Several of the remaining sections in Vaughan's treatise of good government show how these virtues of order, justice and commodity should be reconciled through the control of the

¹²⁵ John Stoughton, 'The arraignment of covetousnesse. In three sermons on Luke 12.15', in Stoughton, *Seaven sermons, preached upon severall occasions* (1640), p.10.

lower orders; through the protection of the yeomanry and subsequent expansion of hospitality; and through the increase of trade.¹²⁶

One means by which religious moralists were able to exploit the 'latitude of words' was by appropriating the concepts and terminology of a commercial landscape and investing these with a stronger aesthetic content. Price's *The marchant* was among several orations that applied the argot of trade and profit to advice on how to 'gaine' heaven.¹²⁷ William King urged his audience of King's Bench prisoners to 'purchase unto your selves the sincere ministry of the Gospell . . . for the purchasing whereof we are advised by our Lord Jesus, to sell all that wee have, rather then to go without it'. New words could also be subject to this treatment. In 1645 Robert Harris urged the mayor and aldermen of London to '*improve* your estates' through good works: 'It is a *sowing*; it is good *husbandry* for a man to sow . . . what you give in works of mercy, you shall reap for the same a greater Crop, and a *greater* harvest'.¹²⁸

There were more direct ways in which the structures of moral economics could be adapted to the realities of economic change. Despite the apparent rigidity built into the binary framework of 'rich' and 'poor', the

¹²⁶ *Politique discourses, treating of the differences and inequalities of vocations, as well publique, as private*, cited in White, *Social Criticism*, p.77; William Vaughan, *The golden grove, moralized in three books: a worke very necessary for all such, as would know how to governe themselves, their houses or their countrey* (1600), sig.Q5^r. For one of many examples in which 'private commodity' is contrasted with the 'common good' see Christopher Hooke, *A sermon preached in Paules Church in London: and published for the instruction and consolation of all that are heavie harted, for the wofull time of God his generall visitation, both in the citie and in the countrey* (1603), sig.B7^v. For an alternative means to Vaughan's of reconciling the two see Smith, *Discourse of the common weal*.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Immanuel Bourne, *The godly mans guide: with a direction for all; especially merchants and tradsmen, shewing how they may so buy, and sell, and get gaine, that they may gaine heaven. Preached in a sermon at Paules Crosse, the 22. of August, 1619* (1620).

¹²⁸ William King, *The straight gate to heaven. A sermon preached before the poore distressed prisoners in the Kings Bench common gaole to their heavenly comfort by William King preacher of the word of God, a much afflicted prisoner there* (1616), p.45; Robert Harris, *True religion in the old way of piety and charity. Delivered in a sermon to the Lord Major and Court of Aldermen of this city of London* (1645), pp.21-22.

definition of each of these signifiers was by no means fixed. We have already seen how some clergy confidently included their own profession within the category 'poor'. Some seventeenth-century texts exploited this flexibility of interpretation in a way that responded to the realignment of social groups within the parish community. Richard Bernard's 1635 *Treatise of charity*, for example, maintained the basic division between rich and poor but the former category was sub-divided into five different 'ranks'. Bernard's broad category of the 'rich' therefore included the 'rich in superfluitie' – 'these in Scriptures are called mightie men of wealth' – and the 'rich in mediocritie', or, 'all those who have some small Tenement, Cottage and a little Stocke, or an honest Trade to live by'. These were not the 'chief inhabitants' of the parish, whose economic and cultural aspirations brought them closer to the social world of the gentry. Nevertheless, they were identified with ratepayers, who carped at exhortations to further liberality, believing the law 'to save them from this care and cost'. Bernard also implied that these men might play a role in one strategy of exclusion – the prevention of pauper marriages – when he urged them to be 'liberall to honest poor couples marrying in the feare of God'.¹²⁹ The division between 'rich' and 'poor' therefore hinged on the possession of property and profit ('stock'), however small and vulnerable to changing tenurial and market conditions, which distinguished even the small husbandman from the landless labourer. Where the mid-Tudor gospellers had imagined the division between rich and poor to be based on a basic inequality of power between landlord and tenant, the early

¹²⁹ Richard Bernard, *The ready way to good works, or, A treatise of charitie, wherein, besides many other things, is shewed how wee may bee alwayes readie, and prepared both in affection and action to give cheerefully to the poor and to pious uses* (1635), pp.19-21, 32, 36, 38.

seventeenth-century moralist found the dividing line in the competitive potential of the individual in an increasingly commercialised world.

The relationship between landlord and tenant of course remained a focus of concern in many sermons. The reality of a more competitive environment meant that many small husbandmen could find themselves increasingly dependent on wage earning to maintain their position. At the same time, many landlords were keen to embrace the new opportunities for conspicuous consumption, which included the rebuilding or improvement of manor houses.¹³⁰ In their texts denouncing oppression the clergy were able to expose the contradictions which attended these adaptations to economic change. Whately, for instance, derided landlords who 'burden and lade their tenants with carriages and like services, more then was agreed upon in the covenant betwixt them, without paying him for it as an other man will do'. Among the examples of this service he included the carrying of 'stone and timber for his building'. The Landlord, he asserted, 'may not challenge this priviledge over the tenant, to make him work for nothing on his estates, where he is not tyed by the condition of his lease'. Furthermore, no landlord was to make any man 'because hee is a tenant . . . take one or two pence in a day, lesse then others give'. In counterposing the language of contract and 'covenant' against seigneurial 'privilege' Whately revealed the tensions caused by the realignment of social forces within the constraints of the institutions and customs of the feudal manorial community.¹³¹

Other clerical texts looked beyond the social alignments of the parish to the power relations that characterised the wider local economy. By the early

¹³⁰ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp. 185, 189.

¹³¹ Whately, *A caveat for the covetous*, pp.68, 73. For a similar depiction of the increase in 'carriages' that resulted from 'sumptuous building' see Richardson, *A sermon against oppression*, p.11.

seventeenth century, economic growth in England's rural industrial districts had helped to create a burgeoning wage-dependent proletariat.¹³² The relationship between landlords and tenants, which was central to traditional forms of complaint, might be adapted to respond to the realities of this economic change. One text that deals in incredible detail with the relationship between a group of employers and their workers is Thomas Carew's 'Caveat for clothiers', originally preached in 1603 to a congregation in Suffolk. The sermon was based on the fifth chapter of James, with its warning to the rich not to withhold the labourer's hire. Carew dismissed the clothiers' objections that '*James* speakes not against them, but against husbandmen', with the insistence that 'we must know if it be the same fault, though it be in another person or trade, it deserves the same reproofe'. Carew alluded to the moralised connection between the payment of due wages and the distribution of relief to the deserving poor, citing scriptural passages such as Matthew 3:5 – 'The Lorde wilbe a swift witnesse against them that wrongfully keepe backe the hirelings wages, and vex the widows and fatherlesse'.¹³³

In manipulating and developing the structures of an enduring vision of moral economics, therefore, the clergy actively constructed cultural interpretations of economic change. This agency was most strikingly apparent in the discourse of credit, the circulation of which was the central facilitator of economic exchange in this period. Clerical moralists played a crucial role in

¹³² Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.194.

¹³³ Thomas Carew, 'A caveat for clothiers', in Carew, *Certaine godly and necessarie sermons* (1603), sigs.Y2^{r-v}. For the presence of a similar ideological connection in seventeenth-century expositions of the Ten Commandments see Martin Nicholes, *A Catechism, composed according to the order of the catechism in the Common Prayer Booke* (1631), pp.38-40, Henry Hammond, *A practical catechism* (1649 edn.), p.255. John Williams, *A brief exposition of the church-catechism. With proofs from Scripture* (1695 edn.), p.40.

defining credit or reputation as a set of virtues exhibited in a relationship of trust between men of equal moral standing, rather than a status conferred on an individual by his economic or social inferiors. Whately described 'the cut-throate kindnesse of flatterie' as 'an unprofitable credit, an uncomfortable credit, an hurtfull credit'. True credit, he claimed, was 'to be well esteemed of in the hearts of men', to have gathered 'good testimonie' from a life of 'grace and virtue, true pietie, true holinesse and godlinesse of conversation'.¹³⁴ This construction and perpetuation of a morally freighted concept of credit represented a development of one of the central ethical assumptions in traditional 'commonwealth' discourse. Whilst it is true that the commonwealth came to be increasingly 'redefined' in a way which prioritised and valorised market relationships, it is a mistake to see this as synonymous with a celebration of the acquisitive individual cut loose from social obligations. As Muldrew has shown, a heightened awareness of the complex networks of credit and exchange in fact brought with it an increased emphasis on the importance of the 'society of man'. Admittedly, this 'society' was envisioned in somewhat different terms by early seventeenth-century writers. The emphasis on the 'sociability of commerce' meant that the commonwealth found its ultimate expression not so much in the exercise of distributive justice – paternalistic hospitality, prerogative justice – but rather in the commutative justice of market exchange. The 'exercise of Commerce' maintained its traditional ethical roots, however, in the golden rule of Matthew 22:39 – 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'.¹³⁵ The virtues of charity were to govern the behaviour of both creditor and debtor. As the clergyman Thomas

¹³⁴ Whately, *A caveat for the covetous*, pp.112-14.

¹³⁵ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*; Edward Misselden, *The centre of the circle of commerce* (1623), p.17.

Wilson put it, 'nature requireth to have thynges dooen by conscience, and would that bargainynge should bee builded upon Justice, whereby an upright dealyng, and a charitable love is uttered emongest all men'. William King preached that both the virtue of trust – 'faithfulnes in performance of our promises' – and of forgiveness – 'bonity in hurting no man, benignity in sweet behaviour' – were charitable works. An anonymous text of 1641, which dealt with the injustice of imprisonment for debt, also concluded that 'Christian charity . . . ought to be the only rule of policie, to beget and maintaine a flourishing Common-wealth'.¹³⁶

IV.vi. The Commonwealth as Christian Brotherhood: Principles and Practices of Almsgiving

Religious commentators thus continued to play a vital role in perpetuating the ethical basis on which commerce was conducted. From the late sixteenth century, these considerations of the broader meanings of charity were supplemented by numerous sermons and treatises, which defined and refined the 'art' of almsgiving. Although the importance of discretion in almsgiving became increasingly marked in religious works at this time, these texts remained ambivalent towards the principle of compulsory relief. In their descriptions of parochial welfare, several authors evoked traditional ideas about the place of the church in the collection and distribution of charity.¹³⁷ This was not merely a case

¹³⁶ Wilson cited in Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.44; King, *The straight gate*, pp.18-19. King's sermon must have been particularly persuasive as he himself was imprisoned in King's Bench at the time of preaching this sermon for 'suertieship and debt' (sig.A2^v, Epistle); Anon., *The imprisonment of mens bodys for debt, as the practice of England now stands* (1641), pp.1-8.

¹³⁷ The statute of 1536 (27 Henry VIII, c.25) ordered regular collections of alms on Sundays and holy days in every English parish whilst that of 1552 (5 & 6 Edward VI, c.2) prescribed weekly church collections. In the ideal commonwealth described in Thomas Lupton's *Siuqila too good to be true* (1580), there was a collection for the poor after every sermon, which the minister distributed 'as he shal thinke their necessitie shal requyre' (p.26).

of nostalgia, however, but rather served to subsume English practice within the framework of charity in the international Calvinist community. Thus in 1615 Thomas Cooper compared 'our Collectors for the poore' to the 'Deacons' of the primitive church, who were also 'used in all reformed churches'. These 'collectors' were expected to 'give an account of . . . their distribution to the Pastors and governours of the Church'. Cooper also suggested that 'weekly contibutions' should be augmented by voluntary donations at communion to create a 'common Treasurie, not only to relieve their owne poore, but if occasion shall serve, to comfort other Churches in their afflictions and wants'.¹³⁸

As compulsory rating became more widespread, however, it became increasingly difficult for clerical commentators to deny its presence and necessity. In 1632 John Rogers urged the godly to distinguish themselves from the unregenerate by giving freely, 'not . . . by force of Law, as some [do]'. He nevertheless engaged directly with the structures and limitations of a system of compulsory welfare. Thus he wrote of parochial poor relief being administered by 'the Officers and chiefe of the Towne', without suggesting that these men were in any way answerable to the clergy. The observation of 'a great fault in most Parishes, that the meaner sort beare the chieftest burthen, and not the richest' echoed the complaints of ratepayers across the country. By 1650 clergymen were beginning to confront the social polarisation that was etched on the fabric of the parish by the distinction between ratepayers and poor relief recipients. Thus Edward Willan commented that 'in some Parishes all must be Givers or Receivers'. Rather than acting as a model for parochial welfare policy,

¹³⁸ Thomas Cooper, *The art of giuing. Describing the true nature, and right use of liberality: and proving that these dayes of the gospels have farre exceeded the former times of superstition in true charitie and magnificence* (1615), pp.19-20.

therefore, 'Christes Church' provided a refuge, in which 'all may be both; All Receivers, All Givers'. This image of a mutually supportive community could only be realised, however, by Willan's elaboration of the meaning of 'charity' to include the bestowal of prayers on the rich by the poor.¹³⁹

'Orthodox' clergy had to proceed with caution in linking the ideal practice of charity to the model of the apostolic church, within which the disciples 'were of one heart and of one soul' and 'had all things in common' (Acts 4:32). From the mid-sixteenth century, preachers were acutely aware of the 'anabaptist' gloss put on this passage by those who 'laboured by wrestynge of the Scripture to pulle them selves from under due obedience: saynge that it appeareth in the actes of the Apostles how that they hadde all thynges comen, and therefore none more goodes or ryches, power or auctoritie, then other, but all alyke'. The primitive church was thus reinterpreted as a community of use rather than of possession, where 'division was made unto everye one accordinge unto everye mannes neede'. The concept of 'need' was a flexible one that could embrace hierarchical distinctions. In this way, preachers could claim that 'christen men . . . have all thynges comen, even unto thys day' and could endorse the doctrine that 'mens goodes shuld be comen unto every mans nede, & private to no mans luste'.¹⁴⁰ This was in essence the traditional doctrine of stewardship that permeates almost every discussion of charity in this period. According to this doctrine, the rich were 'stewards in respect of God though owners among

¹³⁹ John Rogers, *A treatise of love* (1632), pp.210, 213, 215; Edward Willan, 'A sermon of Christian charity, preached before the judges of assise at Bury S. Edmonds. 1650', in Willan, *Six sermons*, (1651), p.18. For a comprehensive survey of the disputes over parish assessments in early modern England see Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.365-78.

¹⁴⁰ Lever, *A fruitfull sermon*, sigs.B1^v-B2^r. For a later example of the community of Acts as a model of charity see Samuel Gardiner, *The cognizance of a true Christian, or the outward markes whereby he may be the better knowne: consisting especially in these two duties: fasting and giuing of almes: verie needfull for these difficult times* (1596), p.190.

men'. The debt owed to god for his bestowal of earthly goods could be reversed if these possessions were used for the common good. It would then be repaid 'with usury' in the form of an 'immortal inheritance'.¹⁴¹

Whilst protestant authors naturally presented this reading of Acts as an unassailable truth, it in fact represented a significant break from earlier interpretations of the primitive church. Medieval canonists had equated this community with Plato's *Republic*, arguing that both were founded on natural law. This equivalence was emphasised and developed by the Christian humanists. With regard to the common ownership in *Republic*, Erasmus declared that 'nothing was ever said by a pagan philosopher which comes closer to the mind of Christ'. This close connection between the Platonic and apostolic ideals was elaborated in More's *Utopia*, which declared the essential compatibility of communism and Christianity.¹⁴² This strain of interpretation was accompanied in medieval thought by the insistence that the earth had originally been given in common to all men. St Gregory maintained that since 'the soil is common to all men; when we give the necessities of life to the poor, we restore to them what is already theirs'. Charity, therefore, should be thought of 'more as an act of justice than compassion'.¹⁴³

Although 'orthodox' authors after 1549 reinterpreted these ideals of primitive equality, much of their language is nevertheless inflected with similar idioms of restitution and entitlement. In numerous seventeenth-century sermons

¹⁴¹ 'An exhortation to charity and hospitalitie', in *Three sermons or homelies*, sigs.H2^r, I2^v. This idea that man could end his days in 'credit' with God if the contract of trust had been maintained was a significant reversal of the dominant medieval worldview, which saw man as burdened with a debt to God that could never be fully paid in his life of good works (Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.130-32).

¹⁴² Gratian, *Corpus Juris canonici. Pars 1, Decretum magistri Gratiani* (Leipzig, 1879), p.24; Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p.131; B. Bradshaw, 'More on Utopia', *HJ* 24:1 (March 1981), 18.

¹⁴³ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, trans. E. Hill (New York, 1991), 14.7; Gregory the Great, *Regulae Pastoralis Liber*, trans. H.R. Bramley (Oxford, 1874), pt. 3, ch.21.

we find the implication that any act of charity represented the payment of a debt from the rich to the poor. Preaching in 1643, Samuel Rogers ordered that men 'must give reliefe to those that are in want, because it is but just and right we should so doe . . . it is their due from us, therefore our debt to them, and we must not deferre payment of this debt'. The poor's claim to the goods of the rich was often framed in legalistic terms which offered them a stronger title than the potential donors: 'the poore in their neede', wrote Thomas Cooper, 'are true owners of what God hath made us Stewards of'. Elsewhere, the needy were described as having 'bills of assignment' or a 'letter of Attorny' from God, to the use of men's goods.¹⁴⁴ This discourse of entitlement suggested a superseding of civil law by natural law during times of crisis, an idea that had underpinned the medieval theory of 'extreme necessity'.¹⁴⁵

Patrick Collinson has recently argued that the overriding discursive strategy in protestant sermons and treatises on charity was 'for the preacher to insert himself and religion, as a critical and hopefully not impotent force between property and poverty'.¹⁴⁶ Whilst this undoubtedly reflects the preacher's perception and presentation of his role, it should not be allowed to suggest that 'religion' was an unchanging and unresponsive 'critical force'. In fact, it can be argued that the tensions in religious discourse reflect practical efforts within communities to reconcile the traditional principles of Christian social ethics with

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Rogers, *The poore's pension: a sermon preached in Gregories Church in Sudbury in the county of Suffolke, May 12. 1643. Upon occasion of the charitable reliefe that yearly then, and there is given, towards the covering or clothing of a hundred poore people* (1644), p.21; Cooper, *The art of giving*, p.45; William Bright cited in Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp.159-60; Bezaleel Carter, *Christ his last will and John his legacy. In a sermon preached at Clare in Suffolke* (1621), pp.72-73.

¹⁴⁵ Pope, 'Christian Love for the Poor' 293; S.G. Swanson, 'The Medieval Foundations of John Locke's Theory of Natural Rights: Rights of Subsistence and the Principles of Extreme Necessity', *History of Political Thought* 18 (1997), 399-459.

¹⁴⁶ Collinson, 'Puritanism and the Poor', p.248.

an awareness of the realities of engagement with the market and of the 'serial security' required to maintain networks of credit.

The connection between almsgiving and other quotidian relationships of household-based exchange is exemplified in some of the guidance offered by religious writers. Whately and Christopher Hooke both suggested that 10 per cent of a household's income should be put aside for charitable uses, a figure that of course mirrored the allowable rate of interest on loans. Whately's proposal that each man keep a 'poore mans boxe in his house' to facilitate 'due and prudent giving' may be seen as particularly indicative of the tendency to frame exhortations to charity in terms of a regulated, disciplined household economy.¹⁴⁷ By extension, the receiver was to be examined in the setting of his own household: 'Go and see the miseries of our poore brethren' was an injunction intended both to invoke compassion and to prevent unlicensed begging.¹⁴⁸

There remained an unresolved tension in protestant charitable discourse, therefore, between an understanding of charity as something given out of 'superfluous' income and an insistence that the giving of alms should entail some kind of sacrifice on the part of the donor. The first of these made the individual donor judge and director of his own affairs and could act as a spur to greater accumulation. Thus, as Thomas Becon put it, every man had to 'do his endeavour daily more and more to conserve and keep together his goods that he hath gotten, yea, to augment, increase and enlarge them, that he may be the more able both to

¹⁴⁷ Hooke, *A sermon preached in Paules Church*, sig.C7^v; Whately, *The poore mans advocate*, pp.98, 147-49.

¹⁴⁸ Rogers, *A treatise of love*, p.224. In the same treatise Rogers urges overseers and ministers to be more diligent in informing themselves of the condition of the poor in their parish (pp.217, 225) and discourages the practice of Christmas hospitality, which he claimed drew the 'rude, idle, and prophane' to rich men's houses (p.212). For similar exhortations to visit the poor see Robert Horne, *Of the rich man and Lazarus. Certaine sermons* (1619), pp.32-34 and John Downname, *The plea of the poore, or a treatise of beneficence and almes-deeds* (1616).

live himself, and also to give unto other that have need'.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the respondent to the eighth commandment in seventeenth-century catechisms was often urged to focus first on his own means of getting and spending before considering his relationship to other men's goods.¹⁵⁰ The second discursive strand, however, shifted the point of reference from the individual to the community and focused on patterns of consumption rather than acquisition. Levels of charity had to be responsive to moments of distress and where this distress was particularly acute men should expect to suffer in their own estates. Thomas White, preaching on Christ's commandments to his disciples in Luke 9:3 declared, 'hee doth not Counsell us to give of our superfluous things, for who counteth two Coates to be superfluous? . . . It is a sorie *Sacrifice*, or Service unto God, to Give of our superfluous things'. The language of sacrifice also informed models of fasting, which was to be undertaken 'for the poores sake'. The co-existence of these two divergent idioms reflects the continuing balancing act taking place within communities between individual advancement and collective security.¹⁵¹

When it came to addressing the poor themselves, moralists continued to demand equanimity and stoicism. The reward for such patience would become clear at the Day of Judgement, when the fortunes of rich and poor would be

¹⁴⁹ Becon cited in Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp.114-15. For medieval discussions of the use of superfluous wealth see A. Parel, 'Aquinas' Theory of Property', in C. B. Macpherson (ed.), *Theories of Property from Aristotle to the Present* (Waterloo, Ont., 1979), p.97; B. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law: A Sketch of Canonical Theory and Its Application in England* (Berkeley, 1959), p.37.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, John Ball, *A short treatise contayning all the principall grounds of Christian religion, by way of questions and answers, very profitable for all men, but especially for housholders* (1624), p.208; Nicholes, *Catechism*, p.38. For the increasing stress in seventeenth-century literature on the importance of household management that struck a balance between thrift and neighbourliness see Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, ch.6, especially pp.158-60.

¹⁵¹ Thomas White, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 17. of November An. 1589* (1589), p.33; Gardiner, *Cognizance of a true Christian*, p.99; Vaughan, *The golden grove*, sigs.Q2^v-Q3^r.

reversed. At this time, a 'suddayne change, and great alteration' would occur, 'when the poore man shalbe exalted, and lifted up to the skyes', whilst those that 'playe the tyrants over the poore . . . shalbe taken by the justice of God, and hurled into the depth of hell'.¹⁵² This antagonistic image echoed some popular definitions of social conflict, which 'flagrantly ignore[d] local subtleties of social structure and power relations to define instead a confrontation between 'rich' and 'poor''.¹⁵³ It would nevertheless be overly simplistic to identify too close a connection between this form of popular social description and the judgement-day imagery in early modern sermons. Medieval homilists had envisaged the oppressed accusing their enemies directly: 'the righteous poor will stand up against the cruel rich at the day of Judgment and will accuse them of their works and severity on earth'.¹⁵⁴ Most protestant texts, on the other hand, insisted that the central moment of judgement consisted of a dialogue between Christ and his servants. 'God . . . will call us to a reckoning', wrote John Hayward, 'and all men must deliver in their account'. The prosecuting voice of the oppressed was therefore frequently replaced with the accusations of the individual conscience, which revealed not only outward deeds but all the 'swarmes of evill thoughts, and lusts'.¹⁵⁵ In some protestant sermons, moreover, the figure of Lazarus came

¹⁵² Philip Jones, *Certaine sermons preached of late at Ciceter . . . upon a portion of the first chapter of the Epistle of James: wherein the two severall states, of the riche and poore man are compared and examined* (1588), sigs.F5^{r-v}. For a seventeenth-century example of this imagery see Horne, *Of the rich man and Lazarus*, pp.65, 104.

¹⁵³ A. Wood, 'Poore Men Woll Speke One Day': Plebeian Languages of Deference and Defiance in England, c.1520-1640', in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.72.

¹⁵⁴ Nicholas Bozon cited in Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p.299. By depicting the poor themselves as accusers, medieval homilists such as Bozon and John Bromyard (cf. Owst, pp.300-03) significantly elaborated the Judgement scene in Matthew 25:41-43 in which it is Christ who condemns the damned.

¹⁵⁵ John Hayward, *A sermon of the stewards danger preached at Paules Crosse the 15. of August* (1602), sig.D1^v; Lazarus Seaman, *The head of the church, the judge of the world. Or, The doctrine of the day of judgement briefly opened and applyed in a sermon preached before the Right Honourable, the House of Peers . . . on a publike fast day, Jan. 27. 1646* (1647), p.13. For a seventeenth-century sermon focusing on the accusatory potential of the individual conscience at

to stand not for the destitute beggar but for the godly brethren, whose afflictions might be of both the material and the spiritual kind.¹⁵⁶

IV.vii. 'Up for the Common weal': Social Conflict and the Patriarchal Polity

Any discussion of the connection between clerical discourse and popular protest in this period needs, therefore, to look beyond the widespread judgement-day imagery and towards more earthly depictions of the multitude. By the late sixteenth century, prevailing attitudes towards the place of the populace in the ordered commonwealth had shed little of the ambiguity that had characterised them since the Middle Ages. In the works of Elizabethan poets, playwrights and politicians the commons were frequently depicted as the 'many-headed monster', a pervasive image that expressed a universal fear of popular rebellion. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* the 'rascal many' are 'vile caitiff wretches, ragged, rude, deformed', whilst Thomas Smith described all those below the rank of yeoman as the 'rascabilitie of the popular'. Elsewhere this discourse took on a mocking tone through the figure of the unlearned rural clown. Alongside this imagery, however, ran a powerful counterdiscourse, which made the multitude of the commonalty 'fundamental to the nation's identity and to the legitimacy of its governing order'. On the stage this image was most fully and famously realised in Shakespeare's depiction of Jack Cade, in whom the vices of arrogance and

the Last Days see Immanuel Bourne, *The anatomie of conscience . . . In a sermon preached at the generall assises holden at Derby, in Lent last. 1623* (1623), passim.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Johnson, *Dives and Lazarus. Or rather, Devilish Dives. Delivered in a sermon at Paul's Cross . . . Very necessary for these times and purposes; published for the greater comfort of those that taste the bitterness of affliction* (1677 edn.) [first published 1620], sigs.B4^r, C7^r.

ambition are counterbalanced by an articulation of traditional 'commonwealth' ideals of equity and justice.¹⁵⁷

In clerical discourse we witness a combination of these two currents of thought. The *Homily of obedience* declared any 'murmuring, rebellion, resistance or withstanding, commotion or insurrection' to be 'intolerable ignorance, madness and wickedness'. In the aftermath of the Midland Rising of 1607, Robert Wilkinson condemned 'mutiners' who 'by civill commotion depopulate whole kingdoms', turning the world upside down so that 'a King of three great kingdomes must capitulate with a Tinker'. In the same sermon, however, Wilkinson declared that the transformation of loyal subjects into rebellious 'mutiners' was ultimately attributable to the 'pasture men', whose agrarian policies had 'turned men into beasts, that before were tame and obedient'.¹⁵⁸ This apportionment of blame was of course reminiscent of the post-1549 sermons of the commonwealthsmen. There were further echoes of the past in the anti-enclosure *topos* that the strength of the monarch rested in the strength of his commons, which was only truly cultivated at the head of the plough.¹⁵⁹ Court sermons continued to exhort the king to perform his role as the fount of justice by hearing and answering the poor man's petition.¹⁶⁰ In this way, sermons helped

¹⁵⁷ Spenser cited in C. Hill, 'The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking', in Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1974), pp.183-84; Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. and trans. M. Dewar (Cambridge, 1982), p.75; R. Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London, 1992), pp.195, 296-97.

¹⁵⁸ *Sermons or Homilies Read in Churches in the Time of Elizabeth* (Oxford, 1802), pp.93, 469; Robert Wilkinson, *A sermon preached at North-Hampton the 21 of June last past before the lord lieutenant of the county and the rest of the commissioners there assembled upon occasion of the late rebellion and riots in those parts committed* (1607), sigs.D3^v, F1^{r-v}. For the widespread imagery of the many-headed multitude see C. Hill, 'Many-headed Monster', *passim*.

¹⁵⁹ Thirsk, 'Changing Attitudes to Enclosure' pp.227-28; Francis Bacon, *The Reign of Henry VII*, (Murray's Reprint, London, 1870), p.307.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Wakeman, *Salomons exaltation. A sermon preached before the kings Majestie at None-such, April. 30. 1605* (1605) pp.7, 57-61.

to underwrite 'a political culture which, paradoxically, could be read as emphasising the duties of the powerful and the rights of the weak'. Moreover, the weak were permitted significant agency within this legitimising scheme: clerical discourse helped sustain the widely held belief that 'it was God who gave the poor's curse its power'.¹⁶¹ This was confirmed, for example, in John King's sermon preached at York in 1595, which offered a warning to engrossers 'on whom the curse of the poore lighteth, ratified in heaven, for not bringing forth your corne'. Depopulating enclosure, it was widely believed, brought upon its perpetrator the curse of both God and man. The legitimacy of the curse on the uncharitable was expressed by George Phillips in a treatise of 1600: 'the needy of our age curse you for your cruelty', he declared, 'and that justly too'.¹⁶²

Two recent studies have brought to light the range of ways in which plebeian social critiques could manipulate the legitimising language of the monarchical state. Andy Wood has explored the relationship between patriarchal theories of social and political authority and the images of distress invoked by petitioners and rioters. John Walter has examined the continuum of quotidian protest, from grumbling to seditious libel, and found numerous signs of a willingness to appropriate aspects of the 'public transcript' of paternalism in order to interrogate the actions of magistrates and gentlemen.¹⁶³ A similar process of appropriation and refashioning may also be found in the pulpit. In *The true peace-maker*, preached before the king in 1624, Joseph Hall described a

¹⁶¹ Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence', pp.128, 132.

¹⁶² John King, 'A sermon preached at Yorke the seventeenth day of November in the yeare of our Lord 1595', in King, *Lectures upon Jonas. Delivered at Yorke in the yeare of our Lorde 1594* (Oxford, 1597), p.705; George Phillips, *The life and death of the rich man and Lazarus* (1600), sig.B4^v. For the depiction of the poor man's curse in Medieval homiletic literature see: M. Moisa, 'The Poor in Fourteenth-Century English Society', (University of Birmingham Ph.D. Thesis, 1996), pp. 288-89, 292-93.

¹⁶³ Wood, 'Plebeian Languages of Deference and Defiance', pp.73-77; Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence', *passim*.

world turned upside-down ‘whose wont is to censure him that punishes the fault, not him that makes it’. Most of the recipients of this misguided censure were familiar embodiments of patriarchal authority – the austere father, the diligent magistrate, the sharp preacher – but Hall also included a more unusual group of subjects: the victims of the ‘oppressing Gentleman, that tyrannizes over his Cottagers, incroches upon his neighbours inheritance, incloses commons, depopulates villages, scruzes his Tenants to death’. This oppression escaped punishment, whilst the ‘poore soules that when they are crushed, yield juyce of teares, exhibit bils of complaint, throw open the new thornes, maintaine the old mounds’ were treated as rebels.¹⁶⁴ This remarkable legitimisation of direct action in defence of customary practice betrays the inconsistency of a patriarchal system that was founded on the authority of household heads but punished attempts to fight for the very survival of the independence that underpinned this authority.

Hall preached at a point when the crown was prepared to articulate its support for enclosures that ‘tend[ed] to the good of our commonwealth’. His sermon was delivered in the same year as the repeal of the tillage laws and may thus be read as a warning to the crown that its support for enclosure was incompatible with its paternalistic self-fashioning and claims to ‘solidarity with the plight of the poor’.¹⁶⁵ The revival of royal demesne rights in the forests of the West Country in the 1620s and 30s may not have involved the ‘depopulating’ enclosure of open fields, but it nevertheless threatened the subsistence of the poorest inhabitants. In the 1630s the crown thus tried to paper over the fault lines

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Hall, *The true peace-maker: Laid forth in a sermon before his Majesty at Theobalds* (1624), sigs.C1^v-C2^v.

¹⁶⁵ Hoyle, ‘Disafforestation and Drainage: The Crown as Entrepreneur’, p.378; M. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), p.131.

that had appeared in its perceived 'solidarity' with the poor with the promise that the king was 'very tender of the welfare of . . . the poorer sort of them who had noe right of common at all' and would ensure that they were provided for 'mearely out of his Majesties compassion and grace'. But the material reality fell far short of this promise and for many cottagers the removal of common rights was a devastating blow to a fragile household economy.¹⁶⁶

The discourse of paternalism was characterised by the tension between expressions of solidarity and an insistence on hierarchy and deference. In order to contain this tension, the king had to be seen to be acting in the best interests of his subjects. Where this was not the case, hierarchical distinctions could be exposed, perhaps unintentionally, as inimical to the interests of the poor. Peter Simon, curate of Newland in the forest of Dean, was brought before the Bishop of Winchester in 1631 to answer the charge that he had incited men to rebellion.¹⁶⁷ Simon admitted that during the course of delivering a catechism on the fifth commandment he had said 'that setting the Kings place and qualitie aside, we were all equal in respect of Manhood unto him'. In another context this passage on the common humanity and spiritual equality of mankind would have attracted little official attention. In the inflammatory circumstances in which Simon preached, however, it could be read as a programme for political organisation or at the very least as an evocation of the myth of natural or primitive equality that remained central to the legitimising idiom of popular protest.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ B. Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (Berkley, 1980), pp.134-44, 145-46.

¹⁶⁷ PRO SP 16/190/45: Examination of Peter Simon before Richard, Bishop of Winchester (7 May 1631).

¹⁶⁸ 'The pooremans Joy and the gentlemans plague' (1607): Belvoir Castle Muniment Rooms, Room 1, Case 3, vol.XV, fos.40-41. This libellous poem written in the wake of the Midland

In the light of the foregoing analysis it is clear that we are offering only a partial picture if we accept that the Tudor-Stuart church fulfilled its 'duty . . . to soften the bitterness of class hatred, to keep the lower orders peaceful and subordinate, to stress the religious considerations which untied a hierarchical society against the economic facts which so visibly divided it, to console the desperate'. It is certainly true that preachers who did appear to effect such rhetorical reconciliation could win praise and recognition from high quarters. Richard Curteys' skill at 'easing the tensions between the estates', for example, made him a popular figure in the Elizabethan court.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, we would be mistaken to believe that the church was able to resolve the contradictions in the exercise of power in favour of 'authority', through an unambiguous denial of the legitimacy of political agency by the gathered multitude. In fact, preachers might help to sustain the participatory connotations of commonwealth discourse. These connotations would become incendiary as early as the first months of the personal rule, when the concept of the 'Comon wealth' was explicitly distinguished from that of the 'Kingdome'.¹⁷⁰

The foregoing chapter has examined a number of ways in which protestant texts utilised the paradigm of complaint to formulate narratives of social description

Rising contains the promise, 'usurping Jupiter we will throw downe / and restore dispossessed Saturne to his princely crowne'. I am grateful to John Walter and Steve Hindle for access to a transcript of this important manuscript. For a more detailed discussion of the Saturnalian golden age, in which all things were held in common, see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), p.199.

¹⁶⁹ Hill, 'Many-Headed Monster', p.189; McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p.82.

¹⁷⁰ Como, 'Predestination and Political Conflict', 271. For the articulation of the 'self-regulative' vision of the state in the 1640s see D. Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603-1660* (London, 1999), pp.161-62.

that constructed and explored the complexities of social and economic relationships. Tracing a trajectory of clerical critiques of wealth and power from the mid-sixteenth century into the early Stuart period has allowed us to question some enduring historiographical orthodoxies concerning the 'degeneration' of socio-economic criticism and the disengagement of the clergy from effective censure of the rich. Broadly speaking, this chapter has offered a critique of the perception that clerical complaint had been transformed out of all recognition by the dissemination of a discourse of 'order' and the traumatic experience of economic crises. It has explored some of the points of contact between mid-Tudor agrarian complaint and a number of later protestant sermons and treatises that confronted manifestations of oppression and counselled men in the proper distribution of wealth. Among the structural continuities that can be detected here are a continued willingness to make the parochial clergy rhetorically equivalent to the commons; the framing of texts using the binary division between rich and poor; and the prominence of agrarian imagery, even in sermons intended for the citizens of London. The existence of these continuities does not mean, however, that these later texts were merely manifestations of the 'residual influence' on economic thought of attitudes from the past.¹⁷¹ To think in this way is to misrepresent complaint as a means of interpreting economic change that was fundamentally out of touch with experience. It has been argued here that the creative elaboration and adaptation of the themes and structures of complaint was more extensive than has previously been recognised and that this refashioning engaged, through its manipulation of language and structures, with emerging problems and realities.

¹⁷¹ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.154

One of the weaknesses in some studies of economic attitudes is the relatively uncritical acceptance that the seventeenth century witnessed the triumph of individualism over communalism. This can lead to somewhat simplistic statements about the shifting concerns among religious moralists. McRae, for example, has suggested that the focus of clerical criticism moved from 'social' to 'moral' sins, as protestants became increasingly preoccupied with the condition of the individual conscience.¹⁷² Thus where the commonwealthsmen had censured the distribution of wealth across the nation and within the manorial community, the early Stuart moralist concentrated on the self-regulation and self-scrutiny necessary to avoid the sin of pride. Some of the examples adduced in this chapter, however, cast some doubt on this argument. Several preachers, it has been argued, emphasised the social effects and the social judgement of individual actions, an image entirely in tune with the importance of reputation to everyday economic transactions.

Clerical complaint may be characterised as a medium that gave expression to numerous social and political tensions. Although these tensions were putatively resolved in 'conservative' visions of social harmony, these might in fact be capable of validating alternative conceptions of the social order. It has not been possible here to discuss all the potential points of contact between the pulpit and popular protest. An attempt has been made, however, to identify the role of preachers in constructing and disseminating discursive frameworks within which new ideals of a reformed social order were conceived. This is particularly evident in the 1540s, which represented a unique juncture in the coherence of political, economic and religious agendas. Even once this moment had passed,

¹⁷² McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.75.

however, it remained possible for preachers to expose the inconsistencies within hegemonic discourse, which acted as facilitators of popular protest. Aspects of the prevailing exhortatory idiom, moreover, suggest the resilience of underlying myths of equality. In this way, clerical discourses of brotherly love, despite insisting on their distance from ‘anabaptist’ notions of communism, might nevertheless sustain the foundations of this thinking. For over a century after Thomas More, then, and before the radicalism of Winstanley, myths of a just communist society were continuing to influence the language and assumptions of even ‘orthodox’ texts.¹⁷³

Over the course of this chapter we have begun to contemplate a theme that will be elaborated throughout the rest of the thesis: the relationship between magistrate and minister. Social criticism from the pulpit did not exist in a ‘critical zone set apart from power’,¹⁷⁴ but neither did it successfully resolve the contradictions and ambiguities inherent within the exercise of this power. The following chapter will focus on a particular sub-genre of sermons – those preached at the assizes – with the intention of examining more closely the relationship between audience and preacher and the agency of the author in manipulating the commonplaces and conventions of these ‘occasional’ texts.

¹⁷³ For a discussion, in relation to other texts, of this ‘cultural preparedness’ for the radicalism of the mid-seventeenth century see McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, ch.4.

¹⁷⁴ S.J. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 1988), p.3.

CHAPTER TWO

Harmony and Discord: The Assize Sermon as a Critical Medium in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England

‘Covetousness’, declared Thomas Pestell in a sermon preached at the Leicestershire assizes, ‘as it imports an exorbitant and unmeet acceptation, and keeping up of money: so tis contrary to justice and in that regarde not unfitte for [this] time’. As he explicated his rendering of Ecclesiastes 5:13 – ‘There is an evill sicknesse I have seene under the Sunne: Riches reserved to the owners thereof, for their evill’ – Pestell lamented that the disease of avarice had turned ‘almoste halfe the world’ into ‘Inclosers, Usurers or Banqueroutes [bankrupts]’. Among the ‘generation of Vipers’, spawned by covetousness and ‘very busie at everie Assises’ were ‘violence and oppression, crafty deceit, and cousonage, betraying & perjury’. The ‘cruell and covetous oppressors’ would, however, receive their just desserts at the Day of Judgement, when they would see ‘those poore Orphans and Widdowes, whom they unjustly rooted out, and solde as shooes, now rising up to accuse them’.¹ Pestell returned to the theme of oppression in his second assize sermon, *The poore mans appeale*. Here he warned those of ‘high place and authoritie’ that the very same poor men whom they sought to ‘bluster and breake’ through their power, were the most highly regarded of God’s creatures.²

¹ Thomas Pestell, *Morbus epidemicus, or, The churles sicknesse. In a sermon preached before the judges of the assises* (1615), pp.2-4, 20. In the printed sermon, the text is erroneously cited as Ecclesiastes 5:12. In both the King James and Geneva Bibles the latter part of the text reads ‘riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt’.

² Thomas Pestell, *The poore mans appeale. In a sermon preached at Leicester assises before the judges* (1620), pp.9, 10, 25. This sermon’s text was Ecclesiastes 5:8 – ‘If in a Countrie thou seest

As these extracts suggest, the assize sermon – preached before the judges and other local notables as part of preliminary proceedings at the county assizes– could become a vehicle for some familiar themes of complaint: the duties of rulers; the punishment of oppressors; and the rights of the poor.³ This preacher even paid direct homage to the persuasive power of mid-sixteenth-century preaching: ‘if with old *Latimer* I should cry nothing but Beware of covetousnesse, Beware of Covetousnesse, it would (peradventure) prove a sufficient preservative against this poyson’.⁴ Pestell was typical of many assize preachers: a university-educated cleric based in the locality, with influential connections in the surrounding area and ambitions to further his career. He was very probably appointed to preach, as was customary, by the county sheriff.⁵ Less typical were his choices of scriptural texts, which allowed for his uncommonly intense concentration on aspects of social justice. Nevertheless, the rhetoric and assumptions of Pestell’s sermons – including their critique of the exercise of power – were more widely articulated within this genre than has generally been acknowledged. This is not to say that the critical potential of this source has been entirely neglected. Assize sermons have in fact been read as

the oppression of the poore, and the defrauding of Justice and Judgement; Bee not astonished at the matter; For he that is higher then the highest regardeth, and there bee higher then they’.

³ For a description of the ritual preceding the assizes, including the conducting of the judges from their lodgings to the church to hear the sermon, see T.W., *The office of the clerk of assize containing the form and method of the proceedings at the Asszes and General Gaol-delivery as also on the crown and nisi prius side* (1682 edn.), pp.23-24. For evidence that the sheriff and his entourage were expected to accompany the judges to church see ‘Sheriff’s Duties and Ceremonial at Carlisle Assizes 1661-2’, printed in J.S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes 1558-1714* (Cambridge, 1972), Appendix 3, pp.297-98. For the suggestion that the congregations at assize sermons were ‘assemblies of the principal persons of each county’ see HMC, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix, pt. 4* (London, 1896), p.49 (The privy council to the Archbishop of York, 31 May 1632).

⁴ Pestell, *The churles sicknesse*, p.5.

⁵ It has been suggested that the ‘sheriff’s chaplain’ preached the sermon (see Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, p.65). There is little evidence that this close relationship was required: less than a quarter of assize sermons were dedicated to the sheriff, although several were dedicated in gratitude to local patrons (see below, Appendix, pp.354-70). For Pestell’s ambitions and turbulent career see C. Haigh, ‘The Troubles of Thomas Pestell’, *JBS* 41:4 (October 2002), 403-28.

testaments to clerical discontent with the legal profession and despair over the proliferation of litigation.⁶ Political criticism in assize sermons by ‘radical local clergy’ has been detected by James Cockburn as far back as 1615, whilst Ann Hughes has suggested that these orations became more conformist in the 1620s and 1630s.⁷ The limitations of these attempts to frame assize sermons within a teleological narrative of political conflict have recently been discussed in a more systematic study of the genre. Working with both manuscripts and printed texts, Arnold Hunt has insisted that these sermons, preached using a common idiom but on specific occasions, reflect not a changing political climate but the concerns that the individual preacher felt should be uppermost in his congregation’s minds. At the same time, Hunt argues, the texts as a whole expose the rhetoric of magistracy and ministry as a means of negotiating a tense relationship rather than a statement of fact.⁸

The present study – based on sixty-five published assize sermons preached between c.1579 and 1640 – is in many ways complementary to Hunt’s approach.⁹ The argument proceeds through a series of thematic sections that examine preachers’ willingness and ability to criticise the rich and powerful and, finally, how this critique could extend from the lawmakers to the rule of law itself. An attempt will be made, however, to reintegrate a broader political

⁶ W. Prest, *The Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1986), pp.224-25; C.W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: The ‘Lower Branch’ of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.233-34; J.A. Sharpe, ‘“Such Disagreement betwyxt Neighbours’: Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England’, in J. Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.169, 184.

⁷ Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, p.231; A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.68-69.

⁸ Hunt, ‘Criticism and Controversy’.

⁹ For a list of these sermons see below, Appendix, pp.349-70. The earliest surviving published sermon is William Overton’s *A godlye, and pithie exhortation, made to the judges and justices of Sussex, and the whole countie, assembled together, at the generall assises* ([1579]).

context into the analysis of these texts. This applies especially to particularly trenchant criticisms of the policies of the state and its agents, but also to the construction of the preached and printed text with an eye to the dynamics of local politics. The final section will expand on this theme, to consider how preachers unwittingly exposed the discord between the professed ideology of Stuart paternalism and the true character of absolute authority.

In order to appreciate how the features of complaint were appropriated within the sensitive political arena of the assizes it must be emphasised at the outset that the 'well-worn platitudes' found in many of these sermons were themselves the raw material of criticism.¹⁰ When assize preachers considered the potential failings and the positive duties of magistrates and lawyers, their exhortations ranged on a scale from fulsome praise to barely disguised censure, but in every case the text was hedged with declarations of political and religious orthodoxy. Assize sermons are an example of demonstrative or epideictic rhetoric, which makes 'an initial presumption of consensus both between members of the audience and between audience and orator'.¹¹ It is certainly true that preachers might attempt to isolate certain sections of their audience from this consensus. On the other hand, it was often the case that space was created for indirect criticism, not by dismantling the consensual framework between the preacher and his auditory, but rather by manipulation of the legitimate strategies of exhortation that were laid upon this framework. So-called 'platitudes', moreover, are not always as harmonious as they seem. Both the clerical author and his educated audience were subject to the pervasive influence of a

¹⁰ Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, p.66.

¹¹ A. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996), p.103.

‘commonplace-book mentality’, which prioritised the collection of ‘pithy remarks worth memorizing’.¹² The creator and the consumer of a text were acutely aware, however, of the desirability of ‘disguised imitation’, or the alteration and amplification of a frequently sourced text.¹³ Educated hearers were not only, therefore, listening out for familiar gnomic phrases, but were also alive to their creative appropriation.

I REBELLION OF THE MIGHTY

When the preacher at assizes stood before his eminent audience, what was he expected to say? It was common for sermons of this genre to contain a passage of political philosophy, in which the principles of divine-right magistracy were defended against attacks from anabaptist and papist enemies. By and large this defence took the form of polemic rather than straightforward propaganda. A number of preachers stressed the assumed consensus between themselves and their listeners: ‘I hope and presume’, declared Francis Gray, that I am not in the midst of a Masterlesse and lawlesse Anabaptisticall Auditory’. Robert Wakeman argued that only the ‘wilfully blinde’, ‘absurdly ignorant’ or ‘desperately malicious’ would fail to acknowledge the divine origins of judicial authority.¹⁴

¹² Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p.72; Todd, *Christian Humanism*, ch.3. Although the straightforward recording of moral maxims from a sermon was considered more appropriate for those at an early stage in their education (cf. Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, p.45), it is clear that even the most learned of auditors continued to use this technique. See, for example, BL Add. MS 48106 (Sir Christopher Yelverton’s notebook of assize sermons); BL Add. MS 34395, fo.43^r (Notes on sermons by William Pickard, ‘a begginge minister’, 1630). For a contrasting example of sermon notes that try to convey something of the preacher’s argument see J. Bruce (ed.), *The Diary of John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, barrister-at-law, 1602-1603* (Camden Society old ser. 99, London, 1868), pp.64-72.

¹³ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, pp.52-53.

¹⁴ Francis Gray, *The judges scripture, or, Gods charge to charge-givers. A sermon preached in St. Nicholas church of Newcastle upon Tyne, before the judges, justices, and gentlemen of the*

Subversive targets were therefore frequently external to the immediate audience. Several preachers engaged in a literary battle with Cardinal Bellarmine and other proponents of Catholic resistance theory. Of course this debate was a matter of domestic security as well as an intellectual battle of wits. As William Worship opined, 'when *Subjects* are thus *Jesuited* (unlesse GOD restraine them) they study professedly the *Art of King-killing*'. Thus preachers frequently paired this disputation with an exhortation to judges and magistrates to suppress recusant activity and enforce the penal laws against Catholics.¹⁵ Occasionally, however, the religious complexion of the congregation fractured this basic consensus between preacher and auditory. Lancelot Dawes claimed he had published his sermon because he 'perceived how distastfull it was to some, that beare Romish hearts in English breasts'. Preaching at Westchester (Cheshire) in 1586 Edward Hutchins chose to focus exclusively on a colourful denunciation of Catholic practice and doctrine, in which Catholics themselves were likened to the 'Foxes' of Canticles 2:15. In his epistle he described how he had been 'requested . . . to bestow som pains in the presence of certaine Recusants'. It is likely that these were prominent members of his audience, given the pointed question at the

towne and countrey, at the assises holden there the three and twentieth day of July. 1635. (1636), p.2; Robert Wakeman, [The judges charge] ([1610]), pp.24-25.

¹⁵ William Worship, *Earth raining upon heaven. A sermon preached at the assises holden at Nottingham, August 5. 1614 (1614), p.24.* For other examples of confutation of Catholic resistance theory see Robert Bolton, 'An assize sermon', in *Two sermons preached at Northampton at two severall assises there. The one in the time of the shrevalty of Sir Erasmus Dryden Baronet. Anno Domini, 1621. The other in the time of the shrevalty of Sir Henry Robinson Knight, anno Domini, 1629 (1635), pp.17-32; William Dickinson, The Kings right, briefly set downe in a sermon preached before the reverend judges at the assizes held in Reading for the county of Berks. June 28. 1619 (1619), sigs.E1^r-E3^r; John Dunster, *Caesars penny, or A sermon of obedience. Preached at St Maries in Oxford at the Assises the 24 of July 1610 (Oxford, 1610), passim.**

end of his text: 'how came the Fox to bee so mighty, but because he was not taken in time?'¹⁶

The corollary to this polemic was of course the need for obedience to the magistrate. Patrick Collinson attributes the particular value placed on the office of magistracy by protestant ministers to a 'profound veneration for order and a strong disposition towards obedience: the double need to obey God and his earthly representatives, and in turn to exact the obedience due from inferiors'.¹⁷ As Hutchins' sermon suggests, however, there was as much, if not more concern in these sermons for the obedience of superiors. Preaching at Oxford in 1624, William Hayes commented that 'it is the custome of greatnesse to challenge impunitie, by reason of their eminence; so that in time they'l out-face authority'.¹⁸ Godly preachers frequently placed drunkenness and swearing alongside recusancy in their lists of dangers to the commonwealth. These preachers went out of their way, however, to avoid associating these sins directly with the poor. They lamented that 'the horrible dalliance with Gods name in vaine swearing' was thought of as 'the qualitie of a generous breeding' or 'the young Gentlemans eloquence', with no 'punishment proportioned to the offence, nor destinate to the offendour'.¹⁹ Several preachers likened the laws to 'spiders

¹⁶ Lancelot Dawes, *Two sermons preached at the assises holden at Carlile touching sundry corruptions of these times* (Oxford, 1614), sig.¶2^r; Edward Hutchins, *A sermon preached at Westchester the viii. of October, 1586 before the judges and certain recusantes: wherein the conditions of al heretiques, but especiallie of stubborn and perverting papists, are discovered, & the duty of al magistrats concerning such persons, applied & opened* (Oxford, 1586), sig.B8^r. The full text of Canticles 2:15 is 'Take us the Foxes, the little Foxes, which destroy the vines, for our vines have smale grapes'.

¹⁷ Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p.153.

¹⁸ William Hayes, *The paragon of Persia; or The lawyers looking-glasse. Opened in a sermon at S. Maries in Oxford at the Assises, the 7 day of July, 1624* (Oxford, 1624), p.6.

¹⁹ Samuel Garey, 'A manuell for magistrates or, A lanterne for lawyers', in Garey, *Jentaculum judicum: or, A breake-fast for the bench: prepared, presented and preached in two sacred services, or sermons, the morning sacrifice before the two assises: at Thetford, at Norwich: 1619* (1623), p.45; Antony Fawkner, *Eirenogonia, or The pedegree of peace, delivered in a sermon intended to the judges at the assises holden at Okeham in Rutland, July 31. 1629. But after upon an occasion, preached at Uppingham, in the same countie, Septemb. 6. 1629* (1630), p.25. For the

webs, which do . . . *Hold the weaker creatures, but let the stronger passe through*'. This popular classical *dictum*, recorded by Erasmus in his *Apophthegmata*, was frequently appropriated in assize sermons to criticise magisterial cowardice in the face of great men.²⁰ There was grave danger in such pusillanimity. 'Connivance at the rebellion of the Mighty', proclaimed Francis Gray, 'is that which cutts the very sinewes of a Commonwealth'.²¹

The acts understood to constitute the 'rebellion of the Mighty' were commonly grouped under the broad umbrella of oppression. Depopulating enclosure, engrossing, usury and exacting lawsuits are among the 'crying sinnes' subject to the preacher's admonitions.²² The occasion of the assize encouraged the preacher to decry not only the oppression of the poor at the rich man's gate but also the poor man's destruction 'under the colour of justice'.²³ A sermon's

failed attempts by some MPs to increase the social reach of the legislation against swearing in the 1620s see J. Kent, 'Attitudes of Members of the House of Commons to the Regulation of 'Personal Conduct' in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *BIHR* 46 (1973), 50-53.

²⁰ Bartholomew Parsons, *The magistrates charter examined, or his duty and dignity opened. In a sermon preached at an assises, held at Sarum in the county of Wiltes, on the ninth day of March, last past, 1614* (1616), p.29. The saying was originally attributed to the Scythian prince Anacharsis in Plutarch's *Lives*: Anacharsis mocked Solon for believing he could check the rapacity and injustice of the Athenians by 'written laws, which are just like spider's webs; they will catch, it is true, the weak and poor, but would be torn in pieces by the rich and powerful'. It is likely that Erasmus' collection of commonplaces, the *Apophthegmata*, was the source for most of the preachers who quoted this (cf. Blench, *Preaching in England*, pp.216, 222). Certainly this might account for the occasional mis-attribution of the saying to Solon himself (e.g. Samuel Burton, *A sermon preached at the gererall assises in Warwicke, the third of March, being the first Friday in Lent. 1619* (1620), p.12).

²¹ Gray, *The judges scripture*, p.7.

²² On enclosure and rack-renting see Worship, *Earth raining upon Heaven*, p.26 and Dawes, 'The first sermon', in *Two sermons*, p.62. On engrossing of corn see Thomas Foster, *Plouto-mastix: the scourge of covetousnesse: or, An apologie for the publike good, against privacie. A sermon preached at the assises in Devon, at the command of the Lord Byshop of Exon, anno, 1630* (1631). On engrossing of land see Bolton, 'A sermon preached at Lent assises, Anno Domini MDCXXX. At Northampton before Sir Richard Hutton and Sir George Crooke, his majesties Justices of Assise', in *Mr Boltons last and learned worke of the foure last things . . . With his assise-sermon, and notes on Justice Nicholls his funerall* (1635), p.233. On usury see Thomas Scott, *The high-waies of God and the king. Wherein all men ought to walke in holinesse here, to happinesse hereafter. Delivered in two sermons preached at Thetford in Norfolke, anno 1620* ([Holland], 1623), pp.75-76.

²³ Edward Gee, 'The curse and crime of Meroz', in Gee, *Two sermons. One, the curse and crime of Meroz. Preached at the assises at Exon. The other a sermon of patience. At St Maries in Oxford . . . Published since his death, by his two brethren, John Gee and George Gee, ministers of Gods Word* (1620), p.23.

particular location might encourage preachers to elaborate further on these themes. Preaching at the Warwickshire assizes in 1620, Samuel Burton reminded his congregation of the providential judgements suffered by those responsible for recent enclosures in the region. Echoing the proverbial wisdom which held that a divine curse would soon follow 'goods ill got', Burton urged his audience to 'looke upon the poore Townships that have beene depopulated. In whose hands are they now? I can name you fortie (for a need) within a great deale lesse then twentie miles of this place, whereof there is not one at this day, that is in the possession of him, or any of his name or bloud, that did depopulate it. But as they have rooted poore men out of their dwellings, so God hath rooted them out of theirs'. These acts of providence were insufficient warning, however, to those 'Nimrods' who 'crie out for more roome . . . which lay the foundation of their houses in bloud, and build them up with crueltie'. Although God would send his own punishment eventually, it was up to the magistrates to intervene before this as 'delegates and arbitrators, and committies on Gods part'.²⁴

Although we cannot know whether those sermons that were particularly forceful against manifestations of oppression brought more rich men to criminal trials at assizes, ministerial condemnation and magisterial activism might sometimes work in harmony. Robert Wilkinson's sermon preached prior to the trial of the rebels at Northampton in 1607 helped set the agenda for the enclosure commission of that year.²⁵ Numerous local landowners were subsequently

²⁴ Burton, *A sermon preached at Warwicke*, pp.22-23, 24. For other examples of this proverbial wisdom in sermons see Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence', p.123 and below, ch.5. For the suggestion that many improving landlords in Warwickshire were also among those who promoted 'traditional' festivities as 'a means of defusing the socially disruptive consequences of their actions', see A. Hughes, 'Local History and the Origins of the Civil War', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (London, 1984), p.247.

²⁵ Wilkinson, *A sermon Preached at North-hampton*. See above, ch.1, p.114.

convicted and fined in Star Chamber, whilst Sir Edward Coke also ensured 'the conviction of some few' perpetrators 'in open assizes'. This action, he declared, had reformed the present depopulations and deterred others from illegal enclosures in the future. As the century progressed, the clergy did not remain lone voices in their criticism of enclosure before the judges. Even after the repeal of the tillage acts in 1624, the Lord Keeper used part of his Star Chamber charge to the circuit judges to remind them that depopulation, or the 'displacing & exterminating' of people, could still be prosecuted at common law. In 1633 Lord Keeper Coventry advised the judges that depopulating enclosure was 'strictly to be punished or an accompt to be given to the king'. If the grand jury failed to present this offence then 'the Judges seing it themselves must present it'. In the same year, Sir Anthony Roper appeared before the assizes at Milton (Kent) to answer charges of depopulation.²⁶ Whether or not assize preachers responded directly to shifts in official attitudes towards enclosure is difficult to judge from the surviving printed texts. It is possible that the inclusion of 'Depopulations' and 'Oppressions' among the sins condemned by Gray at the Northumberland assizes in 1635 reflected the extension of the depopulation commissions beyond the 'middle shires' of country.²⁷ It was certainly more prudent by this time to focus on agrarian oppression than to offer vehement attacks on powerful local recusants.

²⁶ PRO SP 14/48/4; SP 16/255/44: Notes by Sec. Coke of a speech of the Lord Keeper to the Judges on their going the assizes; SP 16/232/42: Notes by Sec. Windebank of the charge of Lord Keeper Coventry to the Judges, previous to their going on assizes (13 February 1633); SP 16/233/36 [Roper]. For the suggestion that a single assize judge would be able to 'behold a *depopulator* upon the Bench, when the many eyes of that County body, either for feare, favor, self-guiltinesse, or other by-respects or neglects, did over-looke him' see Powell, *Depopulation arraigned*, p.80.

²⁷ Gray, *The judges scripture*, p.19. The Lord Keeper's Charge for the year Gray's sermon was preached also included a reminder of the need to check depopulation (cf. K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.427).

II 'WHEN MERCY SEASONS JUSTICE'

Whatever the immediate effect of their admonitions, by allowing space for the sins of oppression, preachers emphasised the judge's duty to visibly protect the poor, not only as victims of oppression but also as defendants.²⁸ A vital part of this protection was therefore the prudent exercise of mercy, which was of course a keystone in the legitimation of the social order.²⁹ In 1640 Michael Wigmore exhorted the judges at Lincoln 'not to be speechlesse in the poore mans cause, as if necessity should have no law'. This brief charge simultaneously registered the need for the formal system of justice to incorporate the principles of natural law and hinted at the justifying rhetoric that would be used by the poor if it failed to do so.³⁰ Considerations of the proper relationship between justice and mercy are a central feature of assize sermons in this period. Like God Himself in His dealings with the world, the judge was expected to transform 'the discordant notes of *mercy* and *judgement*' into a 'blessed symphony'.³¹ It might be assumed that in dealing with this familiar theme the preacher merely added his own voice to a harmonious chorus in defence of the social order. However, the subtle

²⁸ Common-law theory, as articulated by Coke in 1613, held that counsel for the defence was unnecessary, since the judge 'ought to be for the king, and also for the party indifferent'. Coke held it 'far better for a prisoner to have a Judge's opinion for him, than many counsellors at the Bar' (J.H. Langbein, *The Origins of Adversary Criminal Trial* (Oxford, 2003), p.28). Cf. Coke's earlier assertion that 'Justice with-held, only the poorer sort are those that smart for it', in Robert Pricket, *The Lord Coke his speech and charge With a discoverie of the abuses and corruption of officers* (1607), sig.C4^r.

²⁹ D. Hay, 'Property, Authority and the Criminal Law', in Hay *et al.* (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 1975), pp.40-49.

³⁰ Michael Wigmore, *A dissection of the braine. A sermon preached at the assises in Lincoln Anno 1640* (1641), p.13.

³¹ John Bury, *The schole of godly feare. A sermon preached the assises holden in Exeter, March 20. 1614* (1615), pp.31-32. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice* IV:I: 'And earthly power doth then show likest God's / when mercy seasons justice'.

differences in the treatment of this pairing indicate significant variations in the roles assumed by the preachers, reflecting both their own priorities and the broader context of their sermons. The negotiation of the relationship between justice and mercy in these texts is thus one symptom of a 'shared yet diverse linguistic context'.³² Part of the diversity on this subject can be attributed to the uncertain conceptual distance between mercy (or equity) and justice. In Aristotelian terms, they were part of the same 'genus': equity represented a necessary corrective to the universalised pronouncements of the law but was 'not superior to justice'.³³

In a society where discourse was normally structured upon pairs of polarised opposites, this ambiguous pairing was bound to lead to a variety of interpretations. Immanuel Bourne, for example, identified mercy with 'a preventing Justice' and judgement with 'a punishing justice'. The first of these was intended 'to encourage to vertue' by 'timely punishments' of misdemeanours which would keep men from committing 'greater mischiefes'. The second was intended for the punishment of the capital sins of theft and murder 'or worse *impieties*'. Here Bourne seems to speak with the authentic voice of a harsh 'puritan' culture of discipline, where mercy was defined as short, sharp shock treatment, proportionate to the offence rather than the offender.³⁴ Elsewhere, mercy was equated with pity, or charity, transforming the preacher into the poor man's advocate. Pestell urged the judges before him to '*regard the poor in mercy, & the high Oppressor in justice . . . in mercy respect the poore & needy . . . And in justice regard their adversaries*'. Samuel Garey

³² J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985), p.3.

³³ Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (London, 1976), pp.198-200 (Book 5, ch.10).

³⁴ Bourne, *The anatomie of conscience*, p.38. Cf. Scott, *The high-waies of God and the king*, p.21.

described 'a sparing Mercie' exemplified in the figure of '*Bias*, an old Judge of Greece', who 'never condemned any but with teares. . . . He loves a man truly, who loves a man in calamitie: It was *Claudians* counsell to *Honorius*; *miseris misereri*, to pitie the distressed . . . God commands Charitie, the divell commends crueltie'.³⁵

As is so often the case in this type of discourse, the position assumed by the preacher does not appear to have been determined by his place on the spectrum of orthodoxy. The disciplinarian description of mercy offered by the godly Bourne was not 'typical' of puritan discussions of equity. William Perkins' treatise on the subject described it as 'a moderation of mind', the ends of which were 'the maintaining of justice and preservation of peace'. Although equity is not explicitly identified with charity, the mitigation of the law is seen to be justified where the law of nature or of Christian morality would otherwise be violated. In this context Perkins adduced the example of a 'young boy pinched with hunger, cold and poverty', who steals food and clothing 'for relief, being pressed to it by want and not having knowledge or grace to use better means'.³⁶ To this case pertained the three crucial mitigating factors – the youth of the criminal; the small value and immediate utility of the goods stolen; the motivating force of necessity – which in practice so often brought forth acts of 'pious perjury' among juries.³⁷ Turning back to the assizes, we find in a sermon preached at Huntingdon in 1633 by the Laudian Peter Hausted a similar case

³⁵ Pestell, *The poore mans appeale*, p.27; Garey, 'A breake-fast for the bench', in *Jentaculum judicum: or, A breake-fast for the bench*, pp.15-17.

³⁶ William Perkins, 'Epieikeia', in Perkins, *The works of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M. William Perkins* (3 vols., 1631), II, pp.436-38.

³⁷ C. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987), p.195; C. Herrup, 'Law and Morality in Seventeenth-Century England', *P&P* 106 (February 1985), 112-21. Hindle, *State and Social Change*, p.123.

study of a 'young man *compeld by hunger*' who 'steales from his neighbour, bread or other necessaries whereby to releve and sustaine *Nature*'. Hausted urged the judge in such a case to take off 'the edge from the rigour of the law' and afflict 'a milder punishment' upon the defendant.³⁸ Although Perkins and Hausted displayed a common ideological inheritance of the theory of extreme necessity, Hausted's sermon spoke to a particular context and occasion. His target audience was not private individuals, or indeed jurymen, but judges, to whom the prerogative of discretion was deputed by the king. Drawing on Aristotle, he stressed that 'there is no opposition but a sweete and harmonious Agreement' between justice and mercy. Hausted's sermon may be read as an appeal to the judges to make manifest the paternalist credentials of the regime at a time when poor harvests had produced much hardship amongst its subjects.³⁹

The 'veil of equity' in this case was a mitigation of the letter of the criminal law in order to demonstrate the regime's regard to the principles of natural law. When it came to civil suits, however, equity took on a different meaning, implying an impartial or equal treatment of the parties. Preachers regularly turned to the Old Testament for proofs that true justice could only be served in this way. Exodus 23:3 – 'Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in

³⁸ Peter Hausted, 'A sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon', in *Ten sermons, preached upon severall Sundayes and saints dayes . . . Together with a sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon* (1636), pp.264-65. The date of the sermon is inferred from its being preached during the shrievalty of Sir Capell Beedle, from 1632 until 10 November 1633. For Hausted's Laudianism see *DNB*, IX, pp.171-72; J. L. Davis, *The Sons of Ben: Jonsonian Comedy in Caroline England* (Detroit, 1967), pp.21-24; A. Fox, 'Religious Satire in English Towns, 1570-1640', in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns 1500-1640* (New York, 1998), p.239; A.J. Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough 1603-42' (University of Birmingham Ph.D. Thesis, 1989), pp.39, 46.

³⁹ Hausted, 'A sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon', p.265. For evidence that judicial harshness in all types of cases was increasing from as early as the 1590s see J.S. Cockburn, 'Trial by the book? Fact and Legal Theory in the Criminal Process 1558-1625', in J. H. Baker (ed.), *Legal Records and the Historian* (London, 1978), pp.77-78; Hindle, *On the Parish*, p.88. For the harder line taken by seventeenth-century judges with regard to pleas for benefit of clergy see C. Herrup, 'The Counties and the Country: Some Thoughts on Seventeenth-century Historiography', *Social History* 8:2 (May 1983), 178-79.

his cause' – and Leviticus 19.15 – 'Thou shalt not respect the person of the poore, nor honour the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour' – were by far the most popular texts in this connection. Hausted hinted, however, that poverty might need to be taken into account to establish true 'equity' – in the sense of equality – between the parties. His gloss of Exodus 23:3 embraces this paradox: 'And if not the poore man, much lesse does it become [the judge] . . . that his Eyes may let in the greatnesse, the favour, the Friendship of the rich, and potent. For if the person of any man should be accepted certainly in all equity it is the person of the Poore; but yee see here is a strict command against this'.⁴⁰

No such ambiguous concessions were made by Hausted's local rival, the puritan preacher Antony Fawkner.⁴¹ In his sermon, *The widowes petition*, preached at Northampton in 1633, Fawkner made a clear distinction between 'the poore in the eye of *Pitty*' and 'the poore in the sight of justice'. The former he defined as 'in generall every one that wants'; the latter as 'hee & only he, that wants his Due'. This meant that the categories of oppressor and oppressed were not fixed according to social rank. In fact, 'oft times the rich man becomes the Widow; and a poore snake of farre meaner fortunes, is justly intituled the oppressour'. Whilst Poverty itself was therefore 'the object of compassion and mercy', justice could take 'little or no notice of generall calamity'. The message is reinforced through Genevan translations of the key passages from Exodus and Leviticus. The latter thus appears as a more stark warning against partiality:

⁴⁰ Hausted, 'A sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon', p.277.

⁴¹ Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp.118-19. Both Fawkner and Hausted were Northamptonshire ministers. Hausted's implementation of Laudian reforms in the parish of Uppingham caused much resentment among the local gentry and the opposition to these reforms was lead by Sir Everard Fawkner, Antony's uncle. It was presumably Sir Everard's

‘thou shalt not *favour* the person of the poor’.⁴² To some extent, the difference in perspective between Hausted and Fawkner can be read as a testament to the sharpened ideological divisions of the mid-1630s. Certainly the defence of the rule of law over and above judicial prerogative is a strong thread through Fawkner’s sermon and in his earlier assize preaching in the 1620s.⁴³ Fawkner’s ‘godly’ priorities may also have influenced this sermon in another way, however. His insistence that justice pay no heed to ‘generall calamity’ may relate to the expansion in the scale and complexity of credit networks and the explosion in litigation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, all of which helped to bring many men to the ‘calamity’ of debt. The commonplace figure of the ‘widow’ pleading poverty but ‘justly intituled the oppressor’ thus translates in this case to the untrustworthy debtor who had over-reached himself within these networks and found himself insolvent and unable to fulfil his obligations. This sermon is therefore one example of the culturally pervasive godly discourse of self-discipline and thrift, which was intended to forestall this social disruption.⁴⁴

Despite the familiar ring of many of the topics discussed in assize sermons, it was possible for preachers to manipulate these themes to fulfil a number of different roles and agendas. We have focused here on the central pairing of justice and mercy, showing how the authorial voice could range from the authoritarian to the compassionate and suggesting how we might interpret these postures. Although we have begun to consider, within the first two sections of this chapter, the ability of preachers to address the sins of their social

influence that enabled Fawkner to preach at Uppingham in 1629, before Hausted’s appointment as curate there (cf. Fawkner, *The pedigree of peace*, Epistle).

⁴² Antony Fawkner, *The widowes petition, delivered in a sermon before the judges at the assises held at Northampton, July 25. 1633* (Oxford, 1635), pp.8-10, 25.

⁴³ See below, pp.155-56.

⁴⁴ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp.295-98.

superiors, the negotiation of the relationship between magistrate and minister through the medium of the assize sermon is yet to be subject to detailed scrutiny. It is to this question that we now turn.

III MAGISTRACY AND MINISTRY

The assize sermon was an ideal occasion for the expression of the harmony between civil and ecclesiastical authority. Garey's explication of the relationship between '*Moses and Aaron*, the Magistrates and Ministers of God', is typical of such panegyrics in its insistence that the secular magistrate should wield 'the sword of Justice to correct the carcase', whilst the minister held 'the sword of the Spirit to convert the conscience'. This harmony was central to the identity of orthodox protestants and loyal subjects. The separation of 'secular Sovereignty' and spiritual power by Catholic theorists was what led them to be 'pestilent opposites and cut-throates of Government and Kingly Majesty'. Separatists and anabaptists, meanwhile, were 'earnest and painefull . . . in untwisting and pulling asunder the Common wealth from the governour whom God hath joyned together'.⁴⁵ The symmetry between magisterial and divine authority could be expressed rhetorically, by making the pronouncements of the monarch equivalent to the precepts of the Bible. Mathew Stoneham used the punishments described in the final part of his text (Ezra 7:26) to exemplify the three qualities required in a judge, which James I had proclaimed in 'one of his memorable orations uttered in the Parliament house'. These three qualities of courage, knowledge and

⁴⁵ Garey, 'A breake-fast for the bench', p.20; Bolton, 'An assize sermon', pp.17, 32; Theophilus Taylor, *The mappe of Moses: or, A guide for governours. Two sermons lately preached before the judges of assize, and magistrates of the towne of Reding, at two severall assemblies there held for the countie of Berk.* (1629), p.8.

sincerity thereby became analogous with the four attributes of the just magistrate described in Exodus 18:21.⁴⁶ Rhetorical correspondence is also evident between assize sermons and grand jury charges. Reports of these orations stress the attention they paid to the 'corruptions of the times' and in particular to threats to the unity of the church. Coke's charge given at the Norfolk assizes around 1607 focused on the threat of recusancy. This part of his oration was only distinguished from many assize sermons by its lack of an expository text and by the space Coke devoted to a detailed history of attacks on England by its Catholic enemies.⁴⁷

The relationship between magistrate and minister was finely balanced between partnership and dependence, and this was apparent in the presentation and content of assize sermons. Those preachers who chose to dedicate their sermons to judges thereby emphasised their subordinate social position or dependence on judicial power. John Bury used his dedicatory epistle to thank the judges for their 'discreet inquiry' before an inquest into tithes, whilst Thomas Foster broke off in the middle of his sermon to express his gratitude for a favourable judgement in Star Chamber by one of the assize judges.⁴⁸ The dynamic of dependence could also function the opposite way round. In 1637

⁴⁶ Mathew Stoneham, 'The first sermon', in *Two sermons of direction for judges and magistrates* (1608), pp.45-50. Cf. Stoneham's 'Second sermon', p.84, where the four qualities in Exodus 18:21 ('able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness') are integrated with the cardinal virtues of fortitude, wisdom, justice and temperance. For a sermon structured around the qualities in Exodus see Samuel Ward, *Jethro's justice of peace a sermon preached at the generall assises held at Bury St. Edmunds, for the county of Suffolke* (1627 edn.).

⁴⁷ Overton, *A godlye, and pithie exhortation*, sig.A3^{r-v} ('To the Reader'); Robert Bolton, 'Funerall notes upon my patron, Sir Augustine Nicolls Knight, Judge of the Common Pleas', in *Mr Boltons last and learned worke of the foure last things*, p.155; Pricket, *The Lord Coke his speech and charge, passim*. For the description of quarter sessions charges, a similar genre to grand jury charges, as 'lay sermons', see R. Cust and P. Lake, 'Sir Richard Grosvenor and the Rhetoric of Magistracy', *BIHR* 54 (1981), 42.

⁴⁸ Bury, *The schole of godly feare*, Epistle; Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.19. Six printed assize sermons (one of which contains two sermons) were dedicated to the judges who had presided at the assizes (see below, Appendix, pp.354-70). One of these was Bartholomew

Thomas Hurste described how ‘our poore Tribe’ of ministers ‘helpeth to carry the Canopy over Authority: else, what need our Declarations sometimes at S. *Pauls Crosse*, or other solemn places, to justifie the proceedings of State in matters of conscience? . . . Even statizing worldlings that account but slightly of us, yet think that we serve as posts at least upon which the Injunctions & Mandates of the Magistrates are to be fixed’.⁴⁹

More important than this to most preachers was their duty to prick the consciences of the mighty with ‘sharp and charitable termes of reproofe’. Overlaying the variety of authorial roles, therefore, was ‘the very traditional preacher’s pose of offering advice to the magistrate’.⁵⁰ The theme of repentance that is so prominent in these sermons demanded that preachers not only acquainted their audience with ‘the greatnesse of your places’ but also with ‘that which God requires’.⁵¹ It was crucial for the preacher to rouse his audience from the comfort of ignorance: ‘I come not hither to flatter you in your sinnes’, wrote Robert Wakeman, ‘but to instruct you in your duety out of Gods booke’.⁵² Preachers conceptualised this role in terms of acting as a conduit of divinity,

Parsons’ *The magistrates charter examined*, the epistle of which also warned the judges about the erosion of tithes by ‘injurious Prescriptions and Customes’ (sig.A3^v).

⁴⁹ Thomas Hurste, *The descent of authoritie: or, The magistrates patent from heaven. Manifested in a sermon preached at Lincolnes assizes, March 13. 1636* (1637), p.17.

⁵⁰ Westerman, ‘A prohibition of revenge’, in Westerman, *Two sermons of assise*, pp.20-21; McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p.92.

⁵¹ Sermons in which the theme of repentance is particularly prominent include Robert Sanderson, ‘*Ad magistratum*: The third sermon’, in Sanderson, *Ten sermons preached 1. Ad clerum. III. 2. Ad magistratum. III. 3. Ad populum. IV* (1627), pp.238-78, esp. pp.238-45 [preached during the plague year of 1625]; Pecke, ‘The great day dawning . . . Delivered in a sermon before the judges’ [preached at the end of a period of dearth]; Hannibal Gamon, *Gods smiting to amendment, or, revengement. With preservatives against revolting. In a sermon preached at the assises in Launceston, the 6. Of August 1628* (1629), esp. p.38.

⁵² Dawes, ‘The second sermon’, in *Two sermons*, pp.127-28; Wakeman, *The judges charge*, p.34. For the dialectic between omnipotence and obligation inherent in seventeenth-century conceptions of power see K. Sharpe, ‘A Commonwealth of Meanings: Languages, Analogues, Ideas and Politics’, in Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-century Politics* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.53-55.

frequently figuring themselves as ‘ambassadors’ of God.⁵³ Whilst few auditors questioned the right of ministers to deliver ‘a vocall warning . . . from a Pulpit, the Oratory of God’, the boundary between advice and effrontery was fluid and contested. Preachers might seek justification for their plain speaking from scriptural *exempla* such as Nathan’s preaching to David or from the speech of the monarch himself. Preaching at Hertford in the 1610s, the Essex minister William Pemberton defended the preacher’s role as ambassador of Christ by quoting James I’s own words from a recent Cambridge disputation: ‘*The King himselfe ought to obey the Minister . . . as to a spirituall Physician prescribing to him out of the word of God*’.⁵⁴ The king’s words had to be carefully selected, however. Before his accession to the English throne, James VI of Scotland had reminded one of his ministers who preached against the re-imposition of episcopacy that ‘the office of the prophets was ended’.⁵⁵ In the 1630s especially, there were certain risks associated with too confident an assertion of the spiritual authority of the clergy. On the one hand, a preacher might come across as a high-handed ‘clericalist’, an embodiment of the ‘revitalised’ clerical estate that sought an increased role in the administration of secular justice.⁵⁶ Alternatively, preachers risked being accused of fomenting ‘civill warre or breach’ between magistracy and ministry, using a strategy of ‘popularity’. Hurste was especially wary of ‘unadvised Teachers’ who ‘quarell . . . at *Magistratum* the person; yet not at

⁵³ William Pemberton, *The charge of God and the king, to judges and magistrates, for execution of justice. In a sermon preached . . . at the assises at Hartford* (1619), p.16; Hurste, *The descent of authority*, p.26. For the wider popularity of the ‘ambassador’ image (drawn from 2.Cor. 5:20) see Carlson, ‘Shaping the Pastoral Vision of Preaching in England’, p.279. For its use in a court sermon see Richard Eedes, ‘The dutie of a king . . . in two sermons’, in Eedes, *Six learned and Godly sermons: Preached some of them before the kings majestie, some before Queene Elizabeth* (1604), fos.15^v-16^r.

⁵⁴ Pemberton, *The charge of God and the king*, pp.17-18.

⁵⁵ Ferrell, *Government by Polemic*, p.129.

⁵⁶ For a defence of the jurisdictional role of the clergy Robert Sanderson, ‘*Ad magistratum*: The third sermon’, in *Ten sermons*, pp.249-50.

Magistratum, the government . . . alwaies throwing dirt into the faces of Governours'.⁵⁷

A partial reading of some of these texts can obscure their outspoken criticism of the magistracy. Samuel Ward's popular assize sermon has traditionally been seen as one of the most cogent expressions of 'the doctrine of the mutuality of magistracy and ministry' and it does indeed contain powerful images of the godly minister and godly magistrate marching hand in hand in pursuit of moral reformation.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Ward also noted that whilst there were 'religious and able Justices' on the county bench, there was also 'in this silver I feare some drosse' in the form of 'idle pleasurable Gentlemen'. He urged the judges to purge local government of these idle magistrates, and restore it to its 'primative beauty'.⁵⁹ It should be remembered that the Genevan model of Calvinism idealised by preachers such as Ward was, in its early stages, an uncomfortable doctrine for the magistracy. In the 1570s members of the council had to endure numerous sermons by Beza and his followers in which they were implicated directly in covetousness and avarice.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ A. Foster, 'The Clerical Estate Revitalised', in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp.145-7; Hurste, *The descent of authority*, pp.25, 27. For the broader local context of this sermon see C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1980), pp.112, 195.

⁵⁸ Collinson, 'Magistracy and Ministry: A Suffolk Miniature', in Collinson, *Godly People*, p.449.

⁵⁹ Ward, *Jethro's justice of peace*, pp.60, 63. For a similar critique of 'lukewarmnesse' on the county bench see Sanderson, 'Ad magistratum: The third sermon', in *Twelve sermons*, pp.257-61. For a similarly disparaging view of wasteful gentry from another Ipswich preacher see Thomas Scot, *God and the king, in a sermon preached at the assises holden at Bury S. Edmonds, June 13. 1631* (Cambridge, 1633), pp.7-8.

⁶⁰ R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Harmondsworth, 1937), pp.120-21.

IV TECHNIQUES OF CRITICISM

We cannot understand the full potential for criticism, however, unless we recognise the essential ambiguity of the figures of praise and blame, around which demonstrative rhetoric of this kind was constructed. As Kevin Sharpe has emphasised, criticism and compliment were not at opposite ends of the spectrum of political communication during this period.⁶¹ In fact, unconditional praise could be a powerful means of attempting to alter an audience's behaviour. As the Ipswich preacher Thomas Scot observed in his assize sermon preached at Bury in 1623, 'great ones oft times are highly commended for good things which they have not done, and then the prayse hath the vertue of an *Admonition*, and thus they [the preachers] avoide a frowne'. When preachers 'admonish them concerning the good things we know they have done', on the other hand, 'the monition amounts to a *Commendation*; and this is a good way to decline flattery'. By unveiling this strategy of double-speak, Scot appeared to offer the listener or reader a clear set of principles with which to interpret his warnings from the pulpit. Yet he undermined the certainty of this interpretation by suggesting that his calling justified a much more straightforward form of criticism: 'I take not upon me, eyther to teach or reprove you . . . although for the latter if there were occasion, my commission would beare me out'. What seems at first to be an offer of transparency on Scot's part, is revealed on closer inspection to be an example of 'functional ambiguity'.⁶² Scot safeguarded his liberty as a critic – of

⁶¹ K. Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.292-93.

everything from judicial partiality to the proliferation of alehouses – by placing responsibility for interpretative choices onto the individual in dialogue with his own conscience.

Other preachers sought a middle ground through this interpretative minefield by suggesting that whilst praise was not a form of direct criticism, it was nevertheless a means of persuasion. This was no rhetorical conjuring trick thought up by preachers, they reminded their audience, but an hortatory technique drawn from Scripture itself. With reference to the scriptural deification of the judicial office, Hausted argued that God himself, ‘the best Oratour in the World . . . has sayd they are glorious, he has sayd they are excellent, on purpose to perswade them to be so’.⁶³ Meeting this ideal necessitated constant struggle and vigilance. Thus at Exeter in 1630, Foster assured the judges that he could not ‘impute unto you the least blemish of the eye’, but that ‘this kind of commendative, is a commandative; By telling men what they are, we represent to them what they should bee, more, and more’. Praise of past actions acted as an admonition to judges to maintain this reputation through their future dealings, up to the point of their own judgement at the hands of Christ. ‘I have no reprehension, but onely an admonition’, declared Bartholomew Parsons before the judges at Sarum in 1615, ‘*That they do stil that which they doe at this present. . . . well done good and faithfull Stewards of the high God: as you have begun so continue, that the great Maister when hee commeth, may finde you so doing*’.⁶⁴

⁶² Thomas Scot, *Vox Dei: injustice cast and condemned. In a sermon preached the twentieth of March 1622. At the assises holden in St. Edmunds Bury in Suffolke* (1623), pp.30-31; Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p.18.

⁶³ Hausted, ‘A sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon’, p.254.

⁶⁴ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.19; Parsons, *The magistrate’s charter examined*, p.30.

There was genuine discord over where preachers should draw the line in reproving their audience, whether this consisted of a 'country' congregation or a distinguished gathering of civil and ecclesiastical worthies.⁶⁵ It was generally agreed, however, that the persona of the preacher, whose necessary rebukes were delivered on God's behalf, should be distinct from the figure of the 'satyr', whose bitter censoriousness frequently stemmed from personal malice and was often intended to wound or offend individuals. 'Evill I know it would agree both with this place and my calling', asserted Fawkner in 1633, 'if I should performe, what some (I question not) *pro more suo*, according to their ill wont, may expect, in converting the reverend modesty of a Sermon, into the snarling petulancie of a Satyr'.⁶⁶ A personalised agenda might be disguised, however, by the listener's unwillingness to incriminate himself. In an exposition on the theme of moral and spiritual failings among the magistracy, Robert Bolton dared his listeners to reveal their own guilt, suggesting that anyone who believed himself to be innocent should not display any anger at his accusations, '*least thereby he make himselfe seeme, and be suspected to be of the number of those that are naught*'.⁶⁷ Preachers may have calculated an advantage to be gained by shifting responsibility from the orator to the listener, but this is not to say that they had little or no agency in formulating pointed or 'particularised' criticism. The remainder of this chapter will look in more detail at ways in which preachers

⁶⁵ See above, Introduction, pp.29-32. For further discussion of divergent opinions among godly ministers see Hunt, 'Preaching and the People' and T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan movement c.1620-43* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 99.

⁶⁶ Fawkner, *The widowes petition*, p.5. The 'satyrs' were woodland gods in Greek mythology but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the confusion between the words 'satiric' and 'satyric' led to the frequent attribution to the 'satyr' of a censorious quality. This confusion also suggested a connection between the 'satyr' and the personal invective often associated with the genre of 'satire' (*OED*, XIV, p.511).

⁶⁷ Bolton, 'A sermon preached at Lent assises', p.262.

manipulated legitimate rhetorical strategies and adapted commonplace allusions to conjure the 'particular' out of the platitudinous.

V ASSIZE SERMONS AND POLITICS

We now come to examine the critical aspects of these sermons in more detail. The following section will concentrate on the arraignment of corruption in public office and on the indirect indictment of particular policies. This is not to suggest that assize sermons neglected the task of addressing the spiritual needs of private men. The narrative of repentance that figured so prominently within this discourse offered several of these sermons a broader appeal to the godly. William Westerman seemed to recognise this in his admonition against private malice: 'The *beloved* of the Lord that strive to bee *perfect*, and to *bridle the whole bodie*, must not let the tongue loose'. Bourne's sermon, *The anatomie of conscience* made a 'particular Exhortation & Application to the Auditory', but not before making a 'request to the conscionable Reader' to spend one day a week in private contemplation and confession.⁶⁸ There was also a degree of crossover possible between the themes of these sermons and those preached to parochial congregations. Anthony Cade used the narrative of Judas' betrayal and subsequent suicide (Matthew 27:3-5) in his *Sermon of the nature of conscience*, a text which he admitted had previously provided him with 'convenient matter for a countrey Congregation'. Having been prevented from delivering his sermon at

⁶⁸ Westerman, 'A prohibition of revenge', p.19; Bourne, *The anatomie of conscience*, pp.30, 36. For assize sermons focusing almost entirely on the conscience of the 'private' Christian see Robert Harris, *S. Pauls confidence. Delivered in a sermon before the judges of assise* (1628) and Thomas Drant, *The royall guest: or, A sermon preached at Lent Assises, anno Dom. M.DC.XXXVI. at the cathedrall of Sarum being the first Sunday of Lent* (1637).

the assizes in Rutland in 1629, Fawkner subsequently reshaped the text for ‘a Country Auditory’, but he retained the overriding theme of the rule of law and a number of untranslated passages of Latin and Greek.⁶⁹ Despite these caveats, it remains true to say that these sermons were constructed with a specific ‘interpretative community’ in mind: one familiar with classical and scriptural commonplaces and with the rhetorical techniques of criticism described above.⁷⁰ Assize sermons were also seen as an opportunity to define the chief threats to the commonwealth in the preacher’s eyes, a task that could stray into coded critiques of government policy. It is to this aspect of criticism that we now turn.

V.i. Criticising the Regime

In May 1632 the privy council warned the archbishops that sheriffs were appointing preachers who were ‘either men of ill disposition to the present state or government, or want sufficiency or experience for those places and auditories (being assemblies of the principal persons of each county)’. Such preachers had ‘given cause for scandal and offence which is of dangerous consequence, and might easily be prevented if election were made of discreet and able men’. In future, it was declared, the bishops were to oversee all appointments out of ‘the gravest and most discreet and learned ministers in the counties’.⁷¹ Although bishops had played a part in some appointments prior to this date, the council’s

⁶⁹ Anthony Cade, *A sermon of the nature of conscience . . . Preached before the Right Honourable Sir Henry Hobart Knight and Baronet, Lord Chiefe Justice of the Common Please: and Sir Edward Bromley Knight, one of the Barons of the Exchequer at the assises at Leicester. 1620. July 25.* (1621), p.1; Fawkner, *The pedegree of peace*, sig.A3^r (Epistle).

⁷⁰ S. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980). For the application of the concept of ‘interpretative communities’ to an early modern context see K. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London, 2000).

⁷¹ HMC, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix, pt. 4*, p.49.

order was nevertheless an attempt to effect a change in customary practice that would help ensure the selection of suitably conformist clergy. There is further evidence to suggest that the ecclesiastical élite began to take a keener interest in the place of the sermon in preliminary proceedings. In 1636 the bishop of Norwich was required by William Laud, not only to ensure the appointment of a 'conformable man' to preach, but also to 'admonnish him Sub paena, to read the Service in his Surplis & hood . . . & there to use no prayer, but in the words of the 55th Canon, nor any prayer after the Sermon'. Judges were to attend the whole of this service and not leave immediately after the end of the sermon.⁷² The intensification and further politicisation of religious divisions may account for Fawkner being prevented from preaching at the Rutland assizes in 1629 and for the appointment of Thomas Hurste, a royal chaplain, to preach at the Lincolnshire assizes in 1636.⁷³

The 1632 orders were probably influenced by a particularly contentious piece of preaching by Peter Smart at the assizes held at Durham in July 1628, which attacked a number of innovations brought in to the Cathedral liturgy.⁷⁴ Smart had sought to bring indictments against John Cosin and another of the prebendaries for these popish observances. The religious tensions building around this time are evident in the contrasting attitudes of Justices Whitelocke and Yelverton as to whether these indictments should be admitted at the assizes.

⁷² Bodl. Tanner MS 68 fo.191. For the council's concern over the appointment of the 'ablest, most serviceable, and wel affected persons' as sheriffs in 1636 see T. Cogswell, *Somerset 1625-1640: A County's Government during the Personal Rule* (London, 1961), pp.134-35.

⁷³ Fawkner, *The widowes petition*, sig.A3^r (Epistle). For the religious divisions in Northamptonshire, see Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts' and A.J. Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642', in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, pp.93-113, esp. pp.98-99, 102. In 1629 the diocesan chancellor was John Lambe, an Arminian and staunch opponent of the Northamptonshire puritans. Fawkner's later selection for the assizes in 1633 came after the retirement of Lambe as chancellor and the death of Lambe's patron, Bishop Dove.

⁷⁴ *CSPD 1628-9*, p.243; *CSPD 1629-30*, p.15.

The sermon was eventually burned at York by order of the Archbishop, but not before the matter had been brought to the attention of Laud and the rest of the council.⁷⁵ It is also around this time that we encounter examples of barely guarded political criticism at assizes, such as the censure of Henrietta Maria's Catholicism offered by Thomas Hooker in the late 1620s. In an unpublished sermon, Hooker urged God to 'set on the heart of the King' the eleventh and twelfth verses of the second chapter in Malachi. Hooker did not quote the citation, which reads, 'an abomination is committed: Judah hath married the daughter of a strange god. The Lord will cut off the man that doth this', but his scandalised audience certainly recognised the reference.⁷⁶ Echoes of this rhetoric can be found in an assize sermon preached during the negotiations for the Spanish Match. At the Norfolk assizes in 1620 the preacher and pamphleteer Thomas Scott prayed that God 'in his mercy keepe us from joyning in marriage with *Idolaters*'. In case the point had been missed by his auditors, Scott asked them to judge whether their nation still 'stands now in as honorable termes with other nations in the eye of the world, as it had wont'. This sermon was eventually published in Holland in 1623, a year after the king had issued the 'Directions to preachers' that were designed to stem the flow of anti-Catholic polemic from men such as Scott.⁷⁷ A similar example of anti-Catholic preaching around the

⁷⁵ CSPD 1628-9, p.243; CSPD 1629-30, p.15; Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, pp.232-33.

⁷⁶ See Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, p.201. This record of the event was given by Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia*.

⁷⁷ Thomas Scott, *The projector. Teaching a direct, sure, and ready way to restore the decayes of the church and state both in honour and revenue. Delivered in a sermon before the judges at Norwich, at summer assizes there holden, anno 1620* ([Holland], 1623), pp.9-10, 16. For an analysis of the doctrine of integrated government defined in Scott's writings see P. Lake, 'Constitutional Consensus and Puritan Opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match', *HJ*, 25:4 (December 1982), 805-25. For the 'steady criticism from the pulpits' in 1622 see T. Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.25-33 (quotation from p.32). The most accessible version of the 1622 'Directions to Preachers' can be found in J.P. Kenyon (ed.), *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.145-46.

time of the Spanish Match can be found in Thomas Sutton's *Jethroes counsell to Moses*, delivered in Southwark in March 1622. The 'Catholicke vipers', Sutton asserted, had broken the heart of the body politic. '[W]hat will become of us', he demanded, 'who suffer such professors, as will never proove good subjects to varnish their nests, and make their bowes within her'.⁷⁸

It was possible to construct a more subtle critique of prerogative power or crown policy, which would allow a text to pass under the censor's eye. The ideology of the ancient constitution gave preachers the vocabulary to remind the judges that their delegated sovereign power should remain within the boundaries of the law of the land. Preachers had to tread carefully, however, since the 'Directions' of 1622 forbade any attempt 'to declare, limit, or bound out, by way of positive doctrine, in any lecture or sermon the power, prerogative, and jurisdiction, authority or duty of sovereign princes'.⁷⁹ Preaching at the Oxfordshire assizes in 1624 on Esther 1:15 – 'What shall we doe unto the Queen Vashti according to Law?' – William Hayes averred that '[w]el-deserving antiquity hath made this land of ours as happy as any; by leaving us so ample an inheritance of laws and ordinances. Twere shame not to preserve them as inviolable, as those of *Solon* and the *Medes* that sufferd no repeale'. Parliament could be trusted with the enactment of statutes that corresponded with the law of God and reason. The law against swearing in 1624, for example, would cause 'that honourable assembly' to be admired by 'posterity . . . no lesse for religion then for their wisdome'. By way of contrast, Hayes noted that 'a corrupt Judge may deprave the Law' and that those who 'racke[d] [the laws] beyond their

⁷⁸ Thomas Sutton, *Jethroes counsell to Moses: or, A direction for magistrates. A sermon preached at St. Saviours in Southwarke. March 5. 1621* (1631), p.15.

⁷⁹ Kenyon, *Stuart Constitution*, p.146.

literall intention' were guilty of 'unchristian-like malice'. His audience would very likely have recognised Hayes' unusual appropriation and adaptation of the familiar *exemplum* involving the ancient Persian king Cambyses. This monarch's legendary punishment of a corrupt judge meant that he commonly appeared in the context of a warning to the judiciary to avoid the temptations of bribery. In Hayes' text, however, he is portrayed as a ruler prepared to wrest the law to his own purposes, with the help of 'grosse flatterers', who advised him 'that he being their King might doe what pleas'd him'.⁸⁰

A contrasting set of ideological priorities formed the context for John Dunster's critique of crown policy at the assizes held at Oxford in 1610. Dunster was so forceful in his praise of the 'transcendent liberty' of kings that he had to explain himself in his epistle in response to murmurs of dissent from the common lawyers in his audience.⁸¹ The principal subject of this sermon was the danger posed to the commonwealth by the traditional Catholic enemy. This was a particularly topical theme in July 1610, a mere two months after Ravallac's assassination of Henri IV and a time when the Gunpowder Plot remained fresh in protestant Englishmen's minds.⁸² This text dealt with both written theories and the real threat of the enemy within. Dunster's stated purpose, to 'shew your Lordships the straights in which we are . . . that either we must give them ours, or take from them their heart blood', implied a perceived failure of both protestant

⁸⁰ Hayes, *The paragon of Persia*, pp.27-29. According to Herodotos, Sisamnes, one of Cambyses' judges, accepted a bribe and issued an unjust verdict. The king immediately had him arrested and flayed alive, after which his skin was used to cover the seat from which his son would henceforth sit in judgement. Allusions to this story can be found in Bolton, 'The second assize sermon', in *Two sermons*, p.52; Fawcner, *The pedigree of peace*, p.10; Wakeman, *The judges charge*, pp.36-37.

⁸¹ Dunster, *A sermon of obedience*, sig.A2^v (Epistle).

⁸² An exhortation to clamp down on recusants was also germane to the local context of this sermon: David Williams (JKB) had been suspended from the Oxford Circuit at the end of the previous assizes after allowing recusants to swear a modified oath of allegiance (See Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, pp.226-27).

polemicists and crown policy to deal with the enormity of this threat. It is easy to see how Dunster's invective fitted into the wider discursive framework of criticising the crown's leniency towards 'wicked and deceitfull' Catholics (both secular and Jesuit) at home. Dunster hoped that 'at the least such order would bee taken with them as that their *Recusancy* shoulde not bee to the advantage of their estates'. Under the 'colourable pretense of their losses' men were prepared to 'racke their rentes, and deale hardly with their Tenantes . . . [or] lessen their charge and live far under that state there'. This 'pretense' was sustained by the pragmatism of Exchequer clerks, who, as Michael Questier reminds us, preferred to guarantee the flow of income from recusancy by ensuring that recusant Catholics were subject only to moderate demands upon their estates.⁸³

This critique of agrarian avarice facilitated the progression to Dunster's next target. 'The second sort of wicked ones', he declared, 'is the wicked and cruel man: the greedy depopulator; who to make roome for a sheeheard and his dog, doth send a whole worlde of people a begging'. This close pairing of Catholic ('wicked and deceitfull') and Depopulator ('wicked and cruell'), achieved by the simple figure of repetition (*conduplicatio*), links this sermon to the wider polemical association of popery with tyranny.⁸⁴ This association had been a staple of sixteenth-century evangelical preaching and was by no means absent from early seventeenth-century assize sermons. Robert Bolton quoted from the 'noble pen' of king James himself to this effect: '*greater outward peace and plenty, greater inward peace with spirituall and celestiaall treasures, were never heaped upon my grea[t] Britaine . . . since my great Britaine hath shaken*

⁸³ Dunster, *A sermon of obedience*, pp.26, 31-32; M. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge, 1996), p.142.

⁸⁴ Dunster, *A sermon of obedience*, p.24 [vere 33].

off the Popes yoke'. Preaching at Norwich in 1619, Samuel Garey talked of rich oppressors, 'who deale with poore men, as the Roman Clergie did in times past with the Laitie', namely 'Fleece them', 'Shave them' and 'Swallow them up'. Those great men 'Inclosing Commons, Racking Rents, and fines, taking away Coppy-holds, depopulating places' were able to terrify the poor 'with their greatnesse: so that they keepe them in as great awe, as the Pope his disciples, and doctors; who though hee leades millions to hell, yet no man may, or dare to say to him, *Cur ita facis?* why dost thou so?'. Both Garey and Dunster, therefore, combined anti-Catholic polemic with a critique of oppression. But in Dunster's text it is possible to discover a further level of criticism: a questioning of the effectiveness of Stuart social policy. For Garey, the rich oppressors substitute for a past generation of Catholics, taking on their tyrannous properties in the name of covetousness; for Dunster they are equal, present and co-existent threats. The failure of the crown and its judges to prosecute illegal enclosures was therefore every bit as damaging to the commonwealth as its failure to enforce the recusancy laws. Not only was depopulation insufficiently policed, there were even 'devises to fetch the poore owner within the compasse of the law' and deny him his inheritance. The judges were reminded that this was 'a thing . . . which concerneth you neerely. Let not such *Ahabs* find favour in your Courts, let not, o let not Justice . . . be thus blemisht'.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Bolton, 'An assize sermon', pp.13-14; Samuel Garey, 'A manuell for magistrates', pp.41-43; Dunster, *A sermon of obedience*, pp.15, 34-35. Both Garey and Dunster had produced other anti-Catholic works. Dunster was (probably) the author of a work first published in 1607 defending Christian religion against popery (*A protestation against popery by way of a confession of Christian religion collected for the benefit of private friends* (Oxford, 1607)). In 1618 Garey attached 'a short disswasive from poperie' to one of his works, which was addressed to 'Lay Papists, who desire to be true servants to their Saviour, or good Subjects to their Sovereigne' (*Great Britains little calendar: or, Triple diarie, in remembrance of three daies* (1618)). For a further assize sermon linking popery to oppression see Gee, 'The curse and crime of Meroz', p.22.

By the early 1630s, Dunster would have had less cause to question the crown's commitment to the destruction of depopulators, but the fear of creeping Catholicism had become more intense. The posthumous publication of Thomas Sutton's anti-Catholic assize sermon in 1631 exemplifies a strategy of appropriating and disseminating existing works to confront this perceived threat. The printer claimed to have put the sermon into the public domain because 'the seate of Justice is now had in much contempt' and it is clear from comments in his epistle that he lays part of the blame for this on the failure of magistrates to pursue an anti-Catholic agenda.⁸⁶ By the mid-1630s, assize preachers had to exercise greater caution in criticism of the regime's religious policies. The assize sermon at Newcastle in 1635 was delivered by Francis Gray, a preacher in this puritan city, and the published version was dedicated to Gray's 'friends' and patrons among the godly civic elite.⁸⁷ His protestation of loyalty to the crown is suspiciously straightforward: 'we dwell, and long may wee dwell under the guidance and government of a wise and religious king, who labours by all meanes, that Gods worship and service may be preserved, and his word may be purely preached'. In the context of the Laudian reforms that were by then taking hold, listeners and readers may well have interpreted this as the 'prayse [with] the vertue of an *Admonition*' described by Thomas Scot. Certainly this explicit statement of orthodoxy, located towards the end of the text, is likely to have been designed to 'avoide the frowne' of the censor and allow the text to pass into print. Rather than directly attack the monarch, Gray instructed the magistrates

⁸⁶ Sutton, *Jethroes counsell to Moses*, sigs.A2^{r-v} (Epistle, by William Jones).

⁸⁷ Gray's sermon is dedicated to all the aldermen and mayors of Newcastle, past and present, and specifically to the current mayor, Sir Peter Riddel; the active puritan aldermen Sir Lionel Maddison; and the parliamentarian Leonard Carr. For biographical information on these men see R. Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), *passim*.

that their principal duty was the propagation of true religion, 'for it most neerly concernes such as are in high places, that they endeavour, to make their power to serve for the furtherance of Gods true Religion and vertue'. In this way, he directed the judges to place 'the service of God' foremost on their agenda, not least the 'preservation' of existing forms of worship and of preaching that were being undermined by the council and ecclesiastical hierarchy. It was only through the fulfilment of this duty that 'the Countrey may have cause to blese you, Posterity cause to praise you . . . the Ministry cause to pray for you.'⁸⁸ The displacement of exhortation and covert warning from the monarch onto his appointed counsellors or judicial agents was a common means of disguising criticism of the direction in which the regime appeared to be heading.⁸⁹ By shrouding his text in godly language and dedicating it to the personnel of a pious corporation, Gray made clear his own position, but his overt profession of loyalty allowed his text to circulate in print with the stamp of legitimacy.⁹⁰

V.ii. Singling Out the Magistrate

In other cases, of course, a harsh critique of the judiciary was all that was necessary to make clear a sense of dissatisfaction with governance at the centre. Fawkner's biting critique of prerogative justice in his sermon of 1627 – 'he which in the administration of justice straves from the order of the Law is as much an offendour, as he whom he condemnes as a transgressor of the Law' – could be taken as a warning to the king as much as to the judges. It was

⁸⁸ Gray, *The judges scripture*, pp.17, 20-21. For a sermon on this text outside the context of the assizes see below, ch.3.

⁸⁹ This technique was also used, for example, in an anonymous note delivered to the king in 1628 (BL Harl. MS 4889, fo.129^r), discussed in Como, 'Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud's London', 273-74).

nevertheless to the judiciary and lesser magistrates that his plain preaching was explicitly directed. Few preachers were as bold as Fawkner in their warnings of the divine punishment that would be visited on corrupt judges:

Now yee are gods, but you shall die like men: to day you may take away life, to morrow you may lose your own. Now is the prisoner's course, very shortly may bee the best of ours. If then you pervert justice while the staffe is in your hand, expect a deserved misery.

It may well be that the tone of Fawkner's sermon contributed to his being prevented from preaching at the assizes two years later. We cannot know, however, whether this caused direct offence to Sir Richard Hutton, the judge who attended the sermon. Perhaps he was of the same mind as Augustine Nicholls, who, it was claimed, preferred 'profitable and conscionable Sermons. . . . what you call Puritanicall sermons; they come neerest to my conscience, and doe mee the most good'.⁹¹

Not all judges felt this way, of course. Chief Justice Anderson is known to have taken offence at a number of assize sermons preached at Northampton and Leicester in the late sixteenth century.⁹² In 1631, following Thomas Reeve's sermon at the Norfolk assizes, Justice Harvey interrupted his charge to the jury to exclaim, 'It seemes by the sermon that we are corrupt, but know that we can use conscience in our places, as well as the best clergie man of all'. The previous year the same judge had heard a sermon by John Ramsey, which contained

⁹⁰ Gray's text is marked with the imprimatur of Thomas Weekes.

⁹¹ Antony Fawkner, *Nicodemus for Christ, or The religious moote of an honest lawyer: delivered in a sermon, preached at the assises at Okeham, in the county of Rutland, March. 10. 1627*, p.20; Bolton, 'Funerall notes upon my patron, Sir Augustine Nicolls', pp.163, 168.

⁹² Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, pp.217-18.

‘many touches upon the corruptions of judges and councellors’.⁹³ Both these sermons display symptoms of functional ambiguity, which point towards an awareness of censorship and the ways in which particularly powerful and pointed criticisms could be communicated indirectly. The differences between the texts and between their authors, however, suggest the need for caution in reading these sermons as part of a broader ‘crisis in public confidence . . . in an increasingly hostile environment’.⁹⁴

Ramsey’s *Politick reformation*, preached at Norwich in 1632, was a prophetic warning based on Isaiah 1:26 – ‘And I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellours as at the beginning’. This text allowed Ramsey to concentrate on the ‘grand vices’ of those ‘chiefest in place and transgression’. Although his stated intention was to reform rather than transform, reformation in this case involved the purging of *all* the judges, so that the institutions of government could be restored to their ‘primitive integrity’. This was confirmed by Ramsey’s manipulation of the silver/dross metaphor, which was more commonly used to distinguish between good magistrates and bad. Ramsey, by contrast, made the distinction between the office of the magistrate and the person who occupied it. Whilst ‘the places of . . . Governours’ were ‘as pure as silver’, therefore, the ‘unequal managing and execution’ of these places was ‘impure dross’.⁹⁵ The extension of corruption throughout the judiciary was also implied

⁹³ M.A.E. Green (ed.), *Diary of John Rous* (Camden Society old ser. 66, London, 1856), pp.50-51, 62. The preacher at the summer assizes in Norwich is said here to be one ‘Mr Greene’. This is likely to be either a mistranscription or a mistake on Rous’ part, since Reeve’s sermon is dated 17 July 1631 (Thomas Reeve, *Moses old Square for judges, delivered in a sermon in the Greeneyard in Norwich, the 17. of July 1631* (1632)). For similar ‘responses’ (both positive and negative) given by the monarch at the end of Court sermons see McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p.21.

⁹⁴ Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, p.232.

⁹⁵ John Ramsey, ‘The politick reformation’, in *Praeterita, or A summary of several sermons: The greater part preached many years past, in several places, and upon sundry occasions* (1659), pp.206-07, 213, 228. For a contrasting use of the silver/dross metaphor by Samuel Ward see above, p.142.

without being stated directly, using the rhetorical technique of paralipsis in relation to the expository text: 'The Judges and Counsellours in my Text, *were all gone out of the way*. I forbear to add the ensuing words; *There is none that doth good, no not one*'.⁹⁶ In the process of apparently distancing himself from contentious polemic, therefore, Ramsey drew his audience's attention to a more controversial reading of his text.

This corruption, furthermore, could be seen to stretch to the heights of government. Quoting Isaiah 1:23, Ramsey evoked an image of immorality among the chief magistrates: '*Thy Princes are rebellious and companions of Thieves. Every one loveth gifts and follows after rewards.*' Aristotle's commentary on the Emperor Gracchus is also cited in this connection: '*The Guardians and Keepers of the Law, they chiefly wanted a law themselves to restrain their injustice*'.⁹⁷ This imagery was accompanied by what one listener described as a 'similitude . . . of the head receiving all the nourishment, and causing the other members to faile and the whole man to die, which he applied to the commonwealth, where all is sucked upwards and the commons left without nourishment'. The implication that judges were enforcing the will of an unjust monarch was reinforced by Ramsey's choice of a controversial exemplary figure, in the form of William Gascoigne, chief justice of England in the reign of Henry IV. Gascoigne's renowned independence and support for the overriding rule of law was encapsulated in the apocryphal tale of his committing the king to prison. The current crop of magistrates, in contrast to predecessors such as this, were a

⁹⁶ Ramsey, 'The politick reformation', p.227. 'Paralipsis' may be described as stating and drawing attention to something in the very act of pretending to pass it over.

⁹⁷ Ramsey, 'The politick reformation', p.213.

‘degenerating generation; who occupy their rooms oft-times as intruders and usurpers, but constantly abhor the imitation of their vertues’.⁹⁸

Thomas Reeve’s *Moses old square for judges* also used eulogy to make an unfavourable comparison of the current judges with a worthy predecessor ‘once in this circuit’. Although he doesn’t name him, it is likely from Reeve’s description of judicial thoroughness and surveillance that he meant Sir John Popham, who served the Norfolk circuit from 1592 until 1606.⁹⁹ ‘Hee never feared the power of any offender’, Reeve proclaimed, ‘hee feared not the greatest *Scorpion* in the world, but the Judgements of God . . . the more dangerous an offender was, the greater was his pleasure to encounter him’. In contrast to some of the praise lavished on Popham in Star Chamber charges, therefore, Reeve’s commendation focused on his suppression of the rebellion of the mighty. The present judges were therefore exhorted to restrain the licentiousness and various forms of oppression – including the ‘holding away of Commons by force from the poore, as if they were *Gentlemens* auncient demeanes’ – which made many ‘young Gentry in these dayes . . . very ulcers, and sinkes in the *Commonwealth*’.¹⁰⁰

The current age, Reeve claimed, was one in which bribery and corruption abounded; in which the ‘decay of Gentry’ and subsequent ‘crushing [of] the impotent’ proceeded unchecked. The judgement seat was thereby converted into ‘the Rich mans loft, or his free-hold, or his gun-roome, from whence he may discharge at all that come within his reach’. The ‘whispering testimony’ of magnates and ambitious local justices was given as much credence

⁹⁸ *Diary of John Rous*, pp.50-51; Ramsey, ‘The politick reformation’, pp.212, 216, 227.

⁹⁹ Reeve, *Moses old square*, pp.77-79. For Popham’s determination to see ‘notorious offenders’ punished see Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, pp.126n, 197; P.W. Hasler, *The House of Commons, 1558-1603* (3 vols., London, 1981), III, p.92.

as the witness speaking on oath. Reeve reinforced this image of a conspiracy of the rich, serving their own turns, with two particularly interesting scriptural glosses. In the first instance, he paraphrased Ezekiel 22:27 – ‘they are in *the midst of the people, like ravening Wolves*’ – then added his own powerful image: ‘as if the *Judgement-seat* were turned into a hill of *Robbers*’. The second example involves Reeve’s interpretation of Ecclesiastes 4:1, which he viewed as a prophetic warning about the dangers of judicial corruption: ‘I *turned* (saith he) *and considered all the oppressions that are wrought under the Sunne, and behold the teares of the oppressed, and none to comfort them, and strength in the hands of them that oppresse, and none to releeve*’. He then added the following gloss: ‘the *Judge*, and the oppressour (saith he in effect) conspire together to tyrannize over the Common-wealth’. This image surely self-consciously echoed one of the more famous passages of More’s *Utopia*, in which Hythlodæus denounces ‘the commonwealths [which] nowadays anywhere do flourish’ as but ‘a conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth’.¹⁰¹

In contrast to Ramsey’s disguised attack on the corruption at the heart of the regime, therefore, Reeve’s criticism drew attention to the overweening power of the county gentry. The divergent priorities of the two authors can be related to their pastoral careers. Ramsey was a protégé of Sir Roger Townshend, the head of a prominent local puritan family and, as sheriff in 1630, responsible for Ramsey’s appointment as assize preacher that year. Ramsey retained his Norfolk benefice throughout the Interregnum, although he later professed his loyalty to

¹⁰⁰ Reeve, *Moses old square*, pp.77, 81-82, 93.

¹⁰¹ Reeve, *Moses old square*, pp.88-92; More, *Utopia*, pp.240-41.

the restored Stuart regime.¹⁰² Reeve, on the other hand, was ejected in 1643, having refused to take the Covenant and encouraged his parishioners to disobey parliamentary orders. The son of a Norfolk husbandman, he studied at Cambridge to proceed Bachelor of Divinity in 1624 and became a pluralist minister in Norfolk in 1628.¹⁰³ This might help explain Reeve's more overt assertion of clerical over magisterial authority. His chosen text – Deuteronomy 1:16-17 – allowed him to adopt the voice of Moses: 'I charged the Judges at that same time, saying, Heare the controversies of your brethren'. Reeve's audience would have been well aware that both secular and clerical authority were combined in the figure of Moses, and that this combination was becoming increasingly common amongst contemporary clerics. Reeve emphasised that the 'charge' described in his text 'leaves not a thing arbitrary, or onely gives counsell to performe it, but it goes under the nature of a precept . . . hold your selves *sub vinculo*, bound over to obedience, *Charged. I charged*, saith *Moses*; not I exhorted, but I *charged*'. This high-handed clericalism was in itself probably enough to raise Justice Harvey's blood pressure. The repetition of the verb 'charge', furthermore, drew attention to its dual meaning as both command and accusation. This was affirmed when Reeve asked rhetorically whether it was 'impossible for [judges] to have their checkes in government? may there not bee even a Reprobate under the scarlet Robes?'. Reeve's charges of corruption are hard to substantiate with specific reference to Justice Harvey, although the preacher may have been aware of his once fining members of an assize jury £10

¹⁰² For evidence of Ramsey's commitment to the restored monarchy and Church of England, including a dedication to Charles II, see his *Zimri's peace: or, The traytor's doom & downfall. Being the substance of two sermons preached at Apethorp in the county of Northampton* (1661).

¹⁰³ *Diary of John Rous*, pp.50-51; A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised: Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the clergy during the Grand Rebellion, 1642-60* (Oxford, 1948), p.272.

each for wrongful acquittal. Reeve may have interpreted this opposition to 'pious perjury' as one means by which the courtroom became a site of oppression.¹⁰⁴

Even a brief glance at a specific local context might therefore help to enhance our understanding of criticism in these sermons. This is even more germane to those sermons where critical attention is explicitly focused on the county justices. The two assize sermons of Thomas Pestell are particularly interesting in this respect. The first, on the theme of covetousness, contained a particular warning to 'Justices and Gentlemen': 'Let not them fall into a violent grassation, and grinding of the poore, racking and cramping, and squeezing their poore tenants'. This was especially appropriate in the light of the intense enclosing activity to which Pestell's county of Leicestershire was subject in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁰⁵ The choice of dedicatee for the published version of this text was Pestell's patron, Sir Thomas Beaumont. On the face of it, this epistle is a straightforward display of gratitude for patronage, with a typically complimentary tone. The interpretation of this dedication becomes more complex, however, when we consider the local reputation of its recipient. Beaumont had earned himself 'an unsavoury reputation as an encloser' through his enthusiastic improvement of his Leicestershire estates, and was one of several Leicestershire gentry libelled in a poem circulating at the time of the Midland Rising. The verses against him focused on the way in which his reported covetousness and ambition were linked to his position as a magistrate. In the

¹⁰⁴ Reeve, *Moses old square*, pp.69, 72, 75; Hasler, *House of Commons*, III, p.92.

¹⁰⁵ Pestell, *The churles sicknesse*, p.21. Detailed discussions of the scale of enclosure in Leicestershire can be found in L.A. Parker, 'The Depopulation Returns for Leicestershire in 1607', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* 23 (1947), 231-89; Parker, 'Agrarian Revolution at Cotesbach', 41-76. For an analysis that integrates the responses of local clerics with agrarian change in this region see J. Goodacre, *The Transformation of a Peasant Economy: Townspeople and Villagers in the Lutterworth Area 1500-1700* (Aldershot, 1994).

light of this, the placing of Beaumont's name at the start of Pestell's text could take on subversive connotations. Pestell's declaration that he published the sermon out of 'a desire the world should take notice, that if I could doe any thing, it should be to you principally directed', can be read both as an act of politic positioning on the author's part and as a means of pointing to a particular target of his admonition.¹⁰⁶

The oppressive practices of the local magistracy also featured in Pestell's second sermon. In this instance, he urged the assize judges to 'look that such as ar the grand thieves sit not neer you on the bench, while the petite ones plead at the bar for mercy'. Their attention would presumably have been drawn to the leading JPs, who, according to the hierarchy of seating on the courtroom bench, would sit immediately alongside the judges during the trial itself.¹⁰⁷ In exhorting the judges to look to the deficiencies of the county magistracy, Pestell was following the lead set by the crown itself in its Star Chamber charges. There is a significant difference in tone, however, between these charges and Pestell's plea. The constant refrain from the Lord Keeper in relation to the county bench was the need to separate 'bees' from 'drones'; the diligent from the idle and factious. The king's own Star Chamber speech, given in June 1616, named four kinds of bad justices: 'idle Slowbellies'; 'busie-bodies [who] . . . will have all men dance after their pipe'; those who 'made Justice to serve for a shadow to

¹⁰⁶ R. Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: The Case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *P&P* 149 (November 1995), 71-72, 83n; Pestell, *The churles sicknesse*, sig.A2^v (Epistle). The full verse on Beaumont reads:

Sir Thomas in the ruff will take it in snuff
If at sessions he gives not the charge.
He is inwardly covetous, outwardly lecherous
And rows well in a western barge.

¹⁰⁷ Pestell, *The poore mans appeale* (1620), p.27. The seating arrangements in the Courthouse are described by Cockburn thus: 'Where accommodation allowed, the judges sat in the middle of a raised bench, with county magnates, both honorary commissioners of oyer and terminer [the

Faction'; and those with a 'Puritanicall itching after Popularitie'. No mention is made of the undesirability of justices who fell prey to covetous desires as other landlords had, or abused their authority by grinding the faces of the poor.¹⁰⁸

VI THE RULE OF LAW

At the opening of the Devon assizes in August 1603 George Close preached a controversial sermon in which he described the common law as 'a prittye tricke to catch mony withall', 'in parte soe absurd, that noe scripture reason or learning can approve it'. Close's sermon, which never made it into print, so incensed Sir Edward Coke that he submitted a bill of complaint to the king, in which he claimed that Close's attack sprang from his conviction for simony at the previous year's assizes.¹⁰⁹

Close's tirade was far from typical of published assize sermons but it does draw attention to the tensions that existed between the legal profession and the clergy, and indeed between the common law and the law of Scripture. In part this tension stemmed from the common law jurisdiction over tithes, which led some preachers to warn the judges about allowing 'men in outward shew plaine and simple' to challenge the customary rights of the church.¹¹⁰ In the main, however, the 'barrage of criticism' to which lawyers were subjected in assize sermons focused on their putative cupidity and ability to transform the law into

leading justices of the county] and others, ranked in descending order of importance on either side and on a low bench in front' (Cockburn, *History of English Assizes*, p.67).

¹⁰⁸ 'A Speech in the Starre-Chamber. The XX. of June. Anno 1616' printed in C.H. McIlwain, *The Political Works of James I. Reprinted from the Edition of 1616* (New York, 1965), p.340.

¹⁰⁹ Bodl. Eng. MS Th.c.71, fos.7-28. This source is explored in Hunt, 'Criticism and Controversy'.

¹¹⁰ Wakeman, *The judges charge*, pp.20-21. See also Parsons, *The magistrates charter examined*, sig.A3^v; Scott, *The projector*, p.22.

'traps & snares to catch and entangle the unwary'. Lancelot Dawes adopted the 'spiders webs' analogy encountered elsewhere in these sermons to produce a similar image of laws that 'hold wasp, & Beetle and al, and scarce any can burst through them'.¹¹¹ Not all of the fault lay with the lawyers themselves, however. Their 'co-partners' were the litigious clients, 'that enter into bad actions, & largely fee the Lawyers (as the Priests did *Judas*) to apply their wit, learning and cunning, to oppresse the trueth, the right, the Innocent, or weary and disable them to hold out the suite'. 'Cruel oppressors', complained Edward Gee, crushed the poor 'under the colour of justice, by tyring them out by long and tedious courses of Law'.¹¹²

VI.i 'Our Will Shall Be a Law'

The acknowledgement that oppression could occur 'under the colour of justice' implied the essential fallibility and imperfection of human laws. Despite the disjunction between human and divine law that was revealed by the reformulation of the usury laws, it remained a central tenet of orthodoxy that the laws of nations were derived, albeit in a mediated form, from the eternal law of God.¹¹³ Insofar as legislation was formulated by sinful man, however, these laws

¹¹¹ Cade, *A sermon of the nature of conscience*, p.16; Dawes, 'The second sermon', p.139. See also William Est, 'The judges and juries instruction. With a warning to witnesses to shunne the horrible sinne of perjurie', in Est, *Two sermons. The Christians comfort in his crosses . . . And the judges, and juries instruction* (1614), pp.20-21. For the 'spiders webs' imagery see above, p.128-29.

¹¹² Cade, *A sermon of the nature of conscience*, p.41; Gee, 'The curse and crime of Meroz', p.23; Edward Reynolds, *The shieldes of the earth. A sermon preached . . . at the assizes holden at North-hampton: February 25. 1634* (1636), p.32. For extensive critiques of the excess of litigation see John Mayo, *The universall principle the common justice of the world, and the royall law of love: delivered in a sermon at the assises in Dorchester, the 23. Day of July, anno Dom. 1629* (1630) and John Squire, *A sermon preached at Hartford assises, March 14. 1616* (1618 edn.).

¹¹³ J. Daly, 'Cosmic Harmony and Political Thinking in Early Stuart England', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69:7 (October, 1979), 10; Sharpe, 'A Commonwealth of Meanings', p.55. Some assize sermons drew attention to the disjuncture between human and

were necessarily subject to 'errours, and crosses'.¹¹⁴ In particular, the danger of any law enacted by a minority of the population was that it might appear to serve only sectional interests. William Westerman's warning not to make the law an 'engyne to serve our lusts' was echoed in a number of assize sermons and implied in the popular 'spiders webs' imagery. It was one thing to offer general warnings about the *abuse* of a pre-existent legal system and unspecified laws, it was a step further, however, to imply that a particular statute had been enacted with sectional interests in mind. At Thetford in 1617 William Younger chastised the 'lenitie and connivencie' of magistrates, which meant that 'the Law of Bastardie, and some others are but as Spiders webbs, as one spake, the little flies are caught, and hang by the heeles, but *great ones* burst through'. By tying this commonplace of magisterial inadequacy to a specific piece of legislation, Younger encouraged the listener or reader to contemplate whether the statute itself was socially biased. Certainly, parliamentary discussions on bastardy displayed a consistent desire to control poor, young women and a similarly persistent fear of gentlemen being subject to the humiliating punishment of whipping for fathering illegitimate children.¹¹⁵

In the process of elucidating the social bias of human laws, the preacher could remind his audience of the 'hidden transcript' that challenged the legitimacy of the existing order. John Hoskins, who was an outspoken common lawyer as well as a clergyman, preached before the judges on the Oxford Circuit

divine law on the question of usury. See, for example, Scott, *The high-waies of God and the king*, pp.75-6 and Abraham Browne, *A sermon preached at the assises, holden at Winchester the 24. day of Februarie last* (1623), p.26.

¹¹⁴ Miles Smith, *A learned and godly sermon preached at Worcester, at an assise* (Oxford, 1602), p.32.

¹¹⁵ Westerman, 'A prohibition of revenge', p.33; William Younger, *Judah's penance. A sermon at Thetford before the judges of assises in Lent. March 10. 1616* (1617), p.50; D. Dean, *Law-making and Society in Late Elizabethan England: The Parliament of England, 1584-1601* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.16, 185-87.

in the late 1610s on the theme of theft.¹¹⁶ He freely revealed the discrepancies between the ordinances of man and divine commands:

Aske . . . the Patrone of a Benefice, what shalbe done to him that embezels his neighbours goods? Hanging, he cries, were too good for Felons. What then shal bee done to him that robbes his God . . . in Tithes and Offerings? Here he can see no Felonie.

Hoskins then related the anecdote of Alexander and the pirate, the moral of which was that small theft earned its perpetrator the sobriquet pirate, whilst robbing the whole world with armed forces brought the title of Emperor. The subversive implications of this commonplace tale were realised once Hoskins described the way it might be used by a petty thief at the assizes as a wry narrative on his own situation. 'I wonder', Hoskins mused, 'any wittie malefactor, while hee is punished for petty larcenie, can escape application of this Historie. Me thinkes, hee should grant his fingers were to blame for a few trifling points of pidling theeverie. But if hee had robd the bowels of Gods people, by giving many Childrens bread in a deare yeare unto dogges . . . he might have beene some Justice of Peace, or some great landlord'.¹¹⁷ In an anecdote drawn from the same sermon, Hoskins articulated an even more controversial critique of rulers by the ruled. In this 'fabulous relation' a servant begs a magistrate for mercy 'for his Masters sake'. When asked the identity of

¹¹⁶ For Hoskins' criticism of royal policies and defence of the subject's liberties see J. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (London, 1986), pp.60, 70, 123. Hoskins was imprisoned in the Tower in 1614 after an inflammatory parliamentary speech against the king's favouritism towards the Scots.

¹¹⁷ John Hoskins, 'A sermon preached before the judges in Hereford', in Hoskins, *Two sermons preached: The one at Hereford, the other at Pauls Crosse* (1615), pp.10-11. This anecdote was recorded by Erasmus in his *Apophthegmata* and was also found in the *Gesta Romanorum* (A Medieval collection of classical moralisations and dicta). It appears in Gilpin, *A godly sermon*, p.48: 'We rob but a few in a ship, but thou robbest whole countries and kingdomes'. For the use of this story in another assize sermon see William Sclater, *A sermon preached at the last generall assise holden for the county of Sommerset at Taunton* (1616), p.13.

this master, the servant replies, 'I serve God', a retort for which he was accused of 'scoffing at authoritie' and cast into jail. When asked why he had not named his earthly lord the servant answered, 'Because I thought you cared more for the Lord of Heaven'.¹¹⁸

Hoskins used his authority as a preacher to give credence to this 'popular' critique of the integrated system of 'social' and 'political' power, in which lords and magistrates frequently glanced sideways towards each other but rarely looked upwards towards the true source of their authority. The fragility of this 'harmonious' system was further exposed by examples from Scripture of 'extraodinarie designes of Justice' given to ordinary citizens. Jael and Phineas, for example, were granted 'the substance of authoritie from private revelation, though they wanted the solemnities of authoritie from publike deputation'. In the same vein, Samuel Ward described how 'cottages and ploughes have brought forth as able men for the Gowne and Sword, as Palaces and Scepters . . . And the wisdom of some of our neighbour Nations is much to be commended in this, that if they discern an excellent spirit and faculty in any man, they respect not his wealth, or birth, or profession, but chuse him to their Magistracy and weighty employments'. Although Ward attempted to contain the potentially subversive implications of his statement of meritocracy by presenting it as an example of foreign (if contemporaneous) governance, it remains a rare statement of the humanist-inspired use of 'virtue' to define the qualifications for governance.

Preachers did not necessarily need to subvert conservative notions of social hierarchy in order to hint at the potential dangers of a social system in which the 'public' authority of the magistrate depended on his 'private' authority

¹¹⁸ Hoskins, 'A sermon preached at Hereford', pp.11-12.

as a substantial local gentleman. Scott described how the sin of depopulation was ‘committed with a high hand’, so that whilst there were laws against illegal enclosure, often it concerns the *Jury*, the *Justices*; nay, the *Judges* themselves, and therefore the Lawes must be silent in this case’. As part of his ‘poor man’s appeal’ Pestell described a tyrannical landlord, ‘Sir Rehoboam Nimrod’, who inevitably added ‘a Cubite of Justiceship’ to his lands and title. ‘*What Lord shall controule us*’, was the puffed-up cry of oppressors in this mould, ‘wee are Law makers then our selves, and our will shall be a Law, or we can do mischief and the Law shall defend it’.¹¹⁹

VI.ii. Ruling Through Law: Absolute Monarchy and the Peace of the Realm

By the mid-1630s there was an increasing fear that the abuses of prerogative power were causing the distinction between ‘will’ and ‘law’ to disappear. William Prynne, for example, circulated the pithy anagram of William Lawd: ‘I made will law’.¹²⁰ This opposition was eventually to culminate in the charge of the king having ‘a wicked design to erect and uphold in himself an unlimited and tyrannical power to rule according to his will’.¹²¹ But in a very real sense Charles I sought to rule ‘through law’, or rather, through the administration of the law in the provincial courts and through the impression this gave of the monarch and his

¹¹⁹ Ward, *Jethro’s justice of the peace*, p.20; Scott, *The high-waies of God and the king*, p.77; Pestell, *The poore mans appeale*, p.8. For the beginnings of an ideological shift towards virtue ‘increasingly being used to ‘define the [whole] social order’’ see Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.135.

¹²⁰ S.R. Gardiner (ed.), *Documents Relating to the Proceedings against William Prynne in 1634 and 1637* (Camden Society new ser. 18, London, 1877), p. 55. I am grateful to Andrew McRae for this reference.

¹²¹ Charge put to the trial of Charles Stuart in 1649, in S.R. Gardiner (ed.), *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution: 1625-1660* (Oxford, 1906), p.372. As John Morrill notes, however, the word ‘tyrant’ itself was hardly used until the raising of the royal standard in August 1642 (J. Morrill, ‘Charles I, Tyranny and the English Civil War’, in Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993), p.286).

policies. Whereas James I 'chose to represent himself mostly through his words,' his son 'regarded his daily conduct as a representation of his rule, and encouraged others in authority to do so'.¹²²

By the time of the personal rule, the king had come to regard the assize circuits as a means of promoting peace, unity and social reform.¹²³ These ideals are reflected particularly strongly in the assize sermons of Robert Sanderson and Peter Hausted. Three of Sanderson's six published assize sermons were preached at Lincoln and Nottingham between 1630 and 1634.¹²⁴ Hausted's only published assize sermon, which we have already considered in detail, appeared in a collection of 1636. Despite their ecclesiological differences – Hausted was an 'aggressive Laudian foot soldier' whilst Sanderson was 'a staunch conformist, but no anti-Calvinist' – both preachers offered a picture of the judicial office that stressed the importance of the exercise of mercy and compassion towards the oppressed.¹²⁵ In so doing, they urged the judges to emulate the paternalism of the monarch. The 'solidarity' with the poor that was expressed in Stuart social policy was translated in these sermons into a harmonisation of justice and charity through the idiom of neighbourliness. According to Sanderson, judges were obliged 'both in *Charity* and *justice* . . . to use the utmost of their *power*, and to lay hold of all fit *opportunities* by all lawful means to help those to *right* that suffer *wrong*; to stand by their poorer brethren and neighbours in the day of their *calamity* and distress; and to set in for them thoroughly and stoutly in their

¹²² Sharpe, 'Commonwealth of Meanings', pp.94-95.

¹²³ W. J. Jones, *Politics and the Bench: The Judges and the Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1971), p.27; Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, p.429.

¹²⁴ Robert Sanderson, 'Ad magistratum: The first sermon', 'Ad magistratum: The second sermon' and 'Ad magistratum: The third sermon', in Sanderson, *Twenty sermons formerly preached* (1656), pp.331-98.

¹²⁵ Carlson, 'Boring of the Ear', p.289; K. Fincham and P. Lake, 'The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I', in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p.38. For Sanderson's anti-puritanism see Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp.42, 43-44.

righteous causes'. Where an impoverished man's adversary had a '*legal advantage* over him', or in the case of an offence committed against a '*dis-used statute . . . out of ignorance and in-experience*', the judge was to actively promote the poor man's cause: 'give him your *counsel*, and your *countenance . . . speak* for him . . . procure him *right against his adversary* in the former case, and in the later case *favour from the Judge*'. In this way, the act of judgement would be expressive not only of a rigid social hierarchy but also of a brotherly communion between the king and his subjects.¹²⁶

Both these preachers also articulated, however, a more aloof model of rule. Hausted urged the magistrate to 'reserve himselfe (in the name of God) from the People' in order to 'maintaine and increase his renowne', whilst Sanderson declared that 'if *mean men* should have the like free access to the *higher powers*, that great ones have: it would create such *molestation* to the *Magistrate*, and breed such *insolency* in the *peasant*, as could not be suffered'.¹²⁷ This imagery reveals a disparaging attitude towards the commons that undermined the rhetoric of communion and harmony. In part this posture of distaste was a symptom of increasing fragmentation among the 'commons', which had helped create extremes of poverty at one end and the spectre of social mobility at the other. Thus Sanderson criticised both the clamorous peasant, fighting for access to the magistrate, and the ambitious representative of the middling sort, 'a little *gotten up*, to over-top his neighbours in *wealth*' or 'put

¹²⁶ Sanderson, 'The first sermon', pp.333, 334. This exhortation to the judge to 'speak for' the poor blurred the distinction in legal theory between law and fact and between 'counsel' and 'advocacy'. Several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century judges were only prepared to offer 'counsel' by regulating the legality of proceedings and insisted that the defendant should speak in his own defence (see Langbein, *Origins of Adversary Criminal Trial*, pp.29-32). For Sanderson's paternalism and activities as a peacemaker, 'reconciling differences, and preventing lawsuits', see Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp.52, 61-63.

¹²⁷ Hausted 'A sermon preached at the assises at Huntingdon', pp.260-61; Sanderson, 'The second sermon', p.358.

into some little *authority*'. This latter type, Sanderson claimed, was capable of the worst kind of oppression: 'it is scarce credible . . . how such a man will *skrew up* the poor man that falleth into his hands, without all mercy, and beyond all reason'. Any attempt by the monarch, however, to forge peace and unity out of this fragmentation was necessarily hampered by the inter-linked problems of bureaucratic weakness and potential opposition. 'It is one of the unhappinesses of *Princes and Magistrates*', Sanderson remarked, 'that whereas all their speeches and actions are upon *the publick stage*, exposed to the view and censure of the very meanest . . . themselves on the contrary can have very little *true information* of those *abuses and disorders* in their *inferiours*'. Sanderson also warned of the limitations faced by the magistrate 'who is to govern according to *the established Laws* of his Country' and had to 'leave those evils that are without the reach of his authority, to the *just vengeance* of him to whom *all vengeance* belongeth'. This had important implications for Stuart ambitions for social reform through prerogative paternalism, since it meant that such '*grievous oppressions*' as rack-renting or the private sale of commodities to the poor at twice the market price, were only punishable by God, unless specific laws against them were enacted by Parliament.¹²⁸

In the reality of central government discourse, the contradictory models and rhetorics of governance were gradually resolved in favour of government by monarchical will. As Judith Richards has observed, the Stuart monarchs became gradually more distant from their subjects, as they cultivated 'due space and deference'. A proclamation of May 1625 warned would-be petitioners that unless they were under 'some necessary occasion of extremity concerning their owne

¹²⁸ Sanderson, 'The third sermon', p.392, 'The second sermon', pp.357, 363.

estate' they should refrain from journeys to court, whilst the customary ceremonies of touching for the King's Evil were frequently postponed during the 1630s. Overall, as the 1630s progressed, the 'language of necessity and an emphasis upon the prerogative replaced the rhetoric and traditions of communion between the king and his subjects'.¹²⁹ The resulting 'strangeness' of the king to many of his ordinary subjects, and the extent to which this contradicted established popular expectations, was satirised in Martin Parker's pamphlet *The king and the poor northern man* (1633). Here the petitioner, in his 'simplicity', is amazed at how far he has to travel to reach the king. When he discovers the court has moved to Windsor he suggests to his host that 'the king of me has gotten some whit, he had nee're gone away had I not come hither'. Having finally reached the court he initially mistakes a nobleman in a 'proud coate' for the king. The monarch himself of course comes to the poor man's aid, but only 'as soone as the match of Bowles is done'.¹³⁰ Although this pamphlet clearly draws on the idiom of the rural clown for much of its entertainment value, Parker also appears to be playing with the concept of the 'wise fool'. In the simplistic ignorance of the poor northern man lay fundamental truths about the king's failure to effect a 'communion' with his subjects.

¹²⁹ J. Richards, 'His Nowe Majestie' and the English Monarchy: The Kingship of Charles I before 1640', *P&P* 113 (November 1986), 76-81; Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, p.298. Cf. the increasing proportion of Star Chamber cases dealing with seditious libel rather than, for example, enclosure disputes (Manning, *Village Revolts*, p.112).

¹³⁰ Martin Parker, *The king and the poore northerne man. Shewing how a poore Northumberland man, a tenant to the king, being wrong'd by a lawyer (his neighbour) went to the king himself to make knowne his grievances; full of simple mirth and merry plaine jests* (1633), sigs.A4^v, A5^r, A6^{r-v}.

In this concluding section it is pertinent to ask in what ways the overall argument presented in this thesis is advanced by studying in detail the themes, critical perspectives and authorial creativity relating to this particular genre of sermons. It is certainly true that few of the themes that we have encountered here were confined to preaching at the assizes. The divinity and duties of magistracy also featured prominently in city sermons, whether at Paul's Cross or before an urban corporation. The definition and exercise of equity was a subject for theological and legal treatises, whilst critiques of depopulation or oppression were spread across the spectrum of clerical discourse. Having said this, these sermons do possess a form of collective identity. Like the assizes themselves, they represent a point of contact between the centre and the localities. They were one of the few occasions when the preacher could be certain that both prominent local gentlemen and powerful Westminster judges would be present in the same congregation. In both their spoken and written forms, these sermons were pitched primarily at a learned audience familiar with political theory, classical *dicta* and biblical figures. Even the exhortations to jurymen and witnesses may have been intended to serve primarily as a warning to the judges and magistrates to treat jury verdicts and witness testimonies with a degree of circumspection. Although several published assize sermons were short enough to be relatively affordable, they were rarely among the 'best-selling' religious works. Furthermore, assize preachers themselves might choose to limit their readership. William Hayes sent his sermon to the press in his home city of Oxford but declined to 'hazard it among these severe eyes, which daylie scanne our shops and staules'. Instead he

ensured the number of copies would 'not exceed the number of my friends', thereby leaving himself at 'libertie to choose my readers'.¹³¹

The core audience of magistrates and 'great men' therefore provides the key to the interpretation of these sermons and to their importance for the current study. It is clear from a detailed reading of these printed sermons that they are fruitful sources through which to trace further the genre of complaint. This was precisely because, rather than in spite of, the social status of their auditors: magistrates' fears of their equals and betters all too often let the mighty escape justice. These sermons share the broader post-Reformation priority of effecting repentance. This does not mean, however, that we should read them simply as appeals to the individual conscience. In the processes of exhortation and admonition, preachers often articulated the 'hypocrisy of a cruel society'.¹³² In so doing, they reminded magistrates of the hidden transcript of the subordinate and of the consequent necessity of rule by consensus. Whilst we have seen a particularly clear example of this in John Hoskins' sermon, it is hinted at in the numerous critiques of the unashamed abuse of power, which we find across this genre.

A study of a set of sermons so closely integrated into the legitimising rhetoric of the state reveals to us how contested and contradictory concepts of 'legitimate' power actually were. We have seen how harmony shaded into discord as ministers considered the relationship between justice and mercy, or their rights and responsibilities as 'ambassadors' of God. Some preachers emphasised magistrates' responsibility to act only within the law of the land,

¹³¹ Hayes, *The paragon of Persia*, sigs.A2^{r-v}.

¹³² Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p.51.

whilst others exposed this law as imperfect, incomplete, or even a tool of class oppression. Even in the very act of enunciating the legitimising rhetoric of divine-right monarchy, moreover, preachers might in fact expose the gaps between the ideal and the reality. Some preachers, such as Francis Gray, may have been fully aware of this contradiction and intended to draw their audience's attention towards it. Others, such as Robert Sanderson, strove to shore up the paternalistic foundations of the regime, but in his sermon the ideal nevertheless crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions. In this latter case, we witness the gradual collapse of an ideological paradigm in the years prior to the upheavals of civil war.

These sermons also show the variety of ways in which preachers could expose the deficiencies of government and governors without converting their texts into the unauthorised form of 'satire'. A detailed study of these sources allows the necessary space to explore the techniques of 'functional ambiguity', by which preachers transformed platitudes into pointed criticisms. It also allows us to cross-reference recurring figures and aphorisms and to register the unfamiliar within the familiar. In the process, we have been able to note how both national and local contexts, as well as personal experience, could operate on a preacher to help shape his priorities. Although bound by his chosen text and by the broader framework of 'orthodoxy', the assize preacher nevertheless enjoyed a great deal of creative agency in the exposition and application of the text and in the supporting authorities adduced to illustrate his argument.

Detailed analysis of the formative contexts that frame and situate sermons, and of the creative appropriation of forms and traditions, will be central to the next three chapters of the thesis. The treatment of the sources will now

shift, however, from the aggregative and thematic analysis of a large number of texts to the micro-historical interrogation of selected sermons. The following three case studies proceed in chronological order, beginning with two sermons preached by Bezaleel Carter: *The wise king and the learned judge* and *Christ his last will and John his legacy*. The first of these was preached as a lecture in Carter's parish of Cavenham (Suffolk) in 1618; the second at a market-day lecture in the nearby clothworking town of Clare around 1620. The second case study returns us to the genre of assize sermons, in the form of Thomas Foster's *The scourge of covetousnesse*, preached before the assizes held at Exeter in July 1630. Finally, we focus on a series of sermons delivered at the Kettering combination lecture by the Northamptonshire minister Joseph Bentham. These were published in 1630 and 1635 as *The societie of saints* and *The Christian conflict*.

To some extent the methodology in each of these case studies involves relatively straightforward 'contextualisation'. Each chapter will spend some time discussing the contemporaneous economic, political and religious setting of the text in question; outlining relevant biographical information; and identifying the preacher's potential targets. The overall purpose of these chapters is not, however, simply to 'locate' a text within a biographical arc or as a direct reflection of economic experience in a particular locality. The intention is rather to examine the ways in which a sermon could be used as a medium for the articulation and putative resolution of complex and contradictory ideals and aspirations, and to relate these closely to the experience of a single clerical author. Speculative investigation into the identity of potential targets, moreover, offers a means of interrogating the interplay between text and context, and the

relationship between economic and cultural change. The clergymen in these case studies are thereby characterised as agents in the construction and transmission of reputation within local communities. In this way, it is hoped that these chapters will further contribute to the work of opening up sermons to their historical meaning.

CHAPTER THREE

'Great oppressors, extreme landlords and unconscionable tithers': Bezaleel Carter and the Reputation of 'Professors' in Jacobean Suffolk

Our first case study brings us to seventeenth-century Suffolk, and to the works of Bezaleel Carter (c.1590-1629), vicar of Cavenham from 1614 to 1624. Bezaleel was born in Bramford, near Ipswich, the eldest son of the well-known puritan minister John Carter.¹ If the hagiographical account of John Carter's life is to be believed, Bezaleel grew up in a parish where Sunday sermons, catechising and a weekday lecture ensured that 'many sons and daughters were from time to time begotten unto God'.² His father's fame doubtless helped bring Bezaleel to the attention of Suffolk's godly élite. In 1614, three years before obtaining his MA from Clare college, Cambridge, he was presented to the living at Cavenham, near Bury St Edmunds. His patron was Sir Edward Lewkenor, a man known for his piety and puritanism. Ten years later, Carter was promoted by Sir Thomas Jermyn to the nearby rectory of Little Whelnetham, where he was buried in 1629.³

¹ *DNB*, III, pp.1108-09. For confirmation of Bezaleel's parentage see NCC 247 Playford (Will of John Carter, 1634). For the location of Cavenham, Bramford and other places mentioned in this chapter, see Map 1, p.232.

² Samuel Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines*, pp.133-41. This hagiography is based on an account of John Carter's life by his eldest son, John: *A Tomb-stone, or, A broken and imperfect monument, of that worthy man . . . Mr. John Carter* (1653).

³ *Alumni Cantab*, I, p.558; S.H.A. Hervey, *Great Whelnetham Parish Registers, 1561-1850: Little Whelnetham Parish Registers, 1557-1850, with Historical and Biographical Notes, Illustrations, Maps and Pedigrees* (SGB 15, Bury St Edmunds, 1910), p.278. Bezaleel matriculated at Clare but obtained his BA from Christ's before returning to Clare for the Masters inception. The Bishop's Register (Norf.RO DN/REG/16, vol.22) records Carter's institution to Cavenham by the King but in *The wise king* (p.50), Carter notes in the context of praising Lewkenor for purchasing church livings and bestowing them on diligent pastors that he had 'freely and frankly' made him Pastor at Cavenham 'at his great cost and expences'. It is likely,

Carter's three published sermons – *A sermon of Gods omnipotencie and providence* (1615), *The wise king and the learned judge* (1618) and *Christ his last will and John his legacy* (1621) – all went to the press during his incumbency at Cavenham. The first of these is a textbook example of relatively unsophisticated plain preaching, using the providential idiom to strengthen the godly and threaten the reprobate. The sermon follows a very straightforward pattern of doctrine, use and application. This and the over-liberal use of biblical citations betray Carter's relative inexperience and youth.⁴ Although this text was colourful in its condemnation of various sinners – from 'beastly drunkards' and 'hellish blasphemers' to 'extorting usurers' and 'covetous earthworme[s]' – it is in his latter works that Carter finds a sharper and more critical voice, leading one antiquarian to describe reading him as 'like sitting on a bicycle with the wind behind one'.⁵

The wise king and the learned judge was preached in Cavenham, 'upon a lecture-day'. The title is a paraphrase of the expository text: 'Be wise therefore O yee Kings: bee learned, O yee Judges of the earth' (Psalms 2:10). The purpose of the sermon is made clear in its subtitle: 'lamenting the death, and proposing the example, of Sir Edward Lewkenor, a religious gentleman'. In the process of constructing this eulogy, however, Carter also cast himself in the role of the prophet delivering unwelcome criticism to the rich and powerful. In observing that 'too many of our gentry' had an all too apparent predilection for blasphemy,

therefore, that Lewkenor had secured at least a grant of next presentation to the living (in which case the king would remain as official patron), whilst purchasing the impropriation outright.

⁴ Bezaleel Carter, *A sermon of Gods omnipotencie and providence* (1615). In *The faithfull shepherd* (1607), Richard Bernard derided unsophisticated preaching in which the orator insisted on the 'mere upstart quoting of Scripture . . . Chapter and Verse for every word' (cited in Mitchell, *Pulpit Oratory*, p.110).

⁵ Carter, *A sermon of Gods omnipotencie and providence*, pp.28-33; S.H.A. Hervey, *Denham Parish Registers, 1539-1850, with Historical Notes and Notices* (SGB 8, Bury St Edmunds, 1904), p.228.

he echoed Jeremiah's lament: 'woe is me that I am borne to be a contentious man'.⁶

This persona was to emerge once again in Carter's third published sermon. *Christ his last will and John his legacy* was preached at the combination lecture in the Suffolk town of Clare. Its text was John 19:26-27, in which the crucified Christ entrusts the care of his mother to his disciple John. The first part of the sermon consists of a familiar expository division of the text into its actors and context, out of which various 'uses' are derived. Carter invited his audience to compare their meagre sufferings to the great miseries of Christ and contrasted the 'loving faithfulness' of John and Mary in Christ's adversity with the inconstancy of 'false friends'. He then moved on to emphasise the duty of children to relieve and maintain their elderly parents, not only in emulation of Christ but also because 'the relieving of our parents wants' was 'part of that honour due to our parents and required in the fifth commandment'.⁷ Carter elaborated this theme to insist on the need to 'distribute and communicate to the necessity of the Saints'. The ideal community that would then emerge was far from an 'Anabaptisticall' one but Carter insisted that he defended 'no other propriety of goods, then may stand with the communion of Saints'. He thus decried the churlishness and outright oppression of the 'unmercifull misers' who made false claims to piety. This hatred of hypocrisy underpins one of the most controversial passages in the text. Having observed that '[m]ost of some mens religion is meerely verball', Carter went on to suggest that

⁶ Bezaleel Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge* (1619), Title Page, p.38.

⁷ Carter, *Christ his last will* (1621), pp.11-19, 33. For an exposition of the fifth commandment citing this example of the crucified Christ's care for his mother see Robert Pricke, *The doctrine of superioritie, and of subjection, contained in the fift commandment of the holy law of almightie God* (1609), sig.I4^v.

Some (I feare me) even of our greatest professors, [are] as great oppressors, as biting usurers, as extreme Landlords, as unconscionable tithers, as they that are most. Some as bitter raylers as *Rabshekah*, as sacrilegious as *Achan*, as cruell as *Caius*, as dogged as *Nabal*, as unmercifull as Jews, as flintie hearted as Turkes, as lying for gaine as *Ananias* and *Saphira*, as mocking as *Michol*; some (I feare me) even amongst our Professors.

This attack on the reputation of powerful puritans did not pass without comment. In his preface to the reader, Carter revealed that some of his audience had responded to this vehement criticism with an attack on his own reputation, claiming that he ‘was an hatefull enemy to such as are called professors’ and a ‘man of a turbulent spirit’.⁸

The chapter seeks to open up both of these texts to aspects of their historical meaning beyond their place in the canon of plain puritan preaching. In order to reveal their interpretative depth we need to consider the local political, religious and economic contexts in which they were preached. The defining feature of Suffolk’s politico-religious landscape from the 1560s through to the 1640s was the commitment of a core of the county’s leading gentry to the cause of further reformation. These gentlemen populated a number of the livings in their gift with eminent preaching clergy and affirmed their godliness through attendance at lectures and the establishment of schools and almshouses. Carter’s attempt to come to terms with the realities of his own dependence on a wealthy patron, it will be argued, formed the basis of a fundamental critique of the gentry’s virtual monopoly over church livings. His criticism of ‘some of our

⁸ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.11-19, 33, 55-59, 71-72, 84-86, sig.A3^r (‘To the Reader’).

greatest professors', moreover, challenged the meaning of some of their most ostentatious acts of beneficence.

The socio-economic environment of west Suffolk, including the town of Clare, was dominated by the region's cloth industry. The alignment of social groups within this industry remained fluid and unstable during this period. This underpinned, it will be suggested, Carter's vision of a charitable communion of saints. In rural areas outside the immediate hinterland of the major clothworking towns, social structures and agrarian occupations were largely determined by the two very different soil types in the county. The extent of social polarisation in Carter's parish of Cavenham was limited in comparison with areas of cloth production. The sermon he preached here (*The wise king*) may nevertheless be read as, in part, an attempt to harmonise conflicting agrarian interests.

This case study introduces us to a theme that will emerge throughout the remaining chapters: the slippage of authorial identity within the boundaries of a text. In particular, we will see how Carter's sermons could incorporate the personae of poor man's advocate; anxious pastor; loyal chaplain; and subtle satyr. Through these postures, it will be argued, Carter engaged in one of the most vital purposes of this genre: the negotiation and communication of 'reputation'.

I THE DYNAMICS OF A GODLY ÉLITE

I.i. Gentry Supremacy in the Godly Commonwealth

With the decline of magnate influence across East Anglia by the latter half of Elizabeth's reign, Suffolk became a haven for the political and religious

ambitions of county gentlemen. The group of godly gentry around Bury St Edmunds, where noble influence had long been minimal, enjoyed a particularly strong sense of corporate identity.⁹ The height of this solidarity came in the mid-1580s during the infamous 'Bury stirs', which pitched leading puritan gentry such as Sir John Higham and Sir Robert Jermyn against the ecclesiastical élite. What had begun as an unremarkable episcopal attack on non-conformity became a clash over the rights to appoint and supervise preachers and to discipline parishioners. The details of charge and counter-charge in this controversy reveal something of the hold these 'country Joshuas' had over the religious life of Bury and its surroundings at this time.¹⁰

The control of impropriated church livings was a vital means through which these gentry attempted to construct their godly commonwealth. By the early seventeenth century around three-quarters of advowsons in the archdeaconry of Sudbury were in the hands of the laity, compared to only 13 per cent under the control of the crown.¹¹ The appointment of puritan preachers such as John Knewstub, Nicholas Bownd and Robert Allen meant that the county could count among its chief blessings 'the great number of religious, grave, reverend, and learned ministers of Gods holy word, which are planted in this

⁹ MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.40. MacCulloch's book is the essential point of reference for an understanding of the priorities and operation of Suffolk's 'county community'. For individual gentry families see also A. Simpson, *The Wealth of the Gentry, 1540-1660: East Anglian Studies* (Chicago, 1961) [for the Bacon family especially] and J.T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry* (London, 1984), *passim*.

¹⁰ P. Seaver, 'Community Control and Puritan Politics in Elizabethan Suffolk', *Albion* 9:4 (Winter 1977), 303-04, 307, 314. For a detailed analysis of the 'Bury stirs' see P. Collinson, 'The Puritan Classical Movement in the Reign of Elizabeth I' (University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1957), pp.860-930. For an analysis of the events in the context of increasing polarisation between recusants and puritans see MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, ch.6.

¹¹ BL Harl. MS 595. Reprinted as 'The Conditions of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury in the Year 1603', *PSIA* 6 (1888), 361-400 [Suffolk archdeaconry]; *PSIA* 11 (1903), 1-46 [Sudbury archdeaconry]. The patron is listed for 207 of the 228 livings in Sudbury archdeaconry. Laymen (almost all local gentlemen) presented to 153 of these, whilst the crown was nominal patron of only 27 livings. See Map 1, p.232 for the archdeaconry boundaries.

shire'. Even Elizabeth I was alleged to have commented that the reason 'why my country of Suffolk is so well governed' was because 'the magistrates and ministers go together'.¹²

This partnership of sword and word was frequently celebrated in the published works of the clergy themselves. In 1579 John Knewstub dedicated his anti-Catholic polemic to 'those gentlemen in Suffolke, whom the true worshipping of God hath made right worshipfull'. Several later published sermons were dedicated to the gentry upon whose patronage and support the author depended – families such as the Bacons of Redgrave, the Warners of Mildenhall and the Gardiners of Elmswell.¹³ This alliance was famously satirised by Richard Bancroft, who had observed first hand in Bury the *modus operandi* between preachers and gentlemen in the early 1580s. Puritan preachers' sermons, he claimed,

must not touche in anye case the grosse synnes of their good Maisters, either oppression of the poore, enhauncing of Rentes, enclosing of common groundes, sacriledge, symonye, pride . . . nor anye suche like horrible synnes wherewith all the most of our precise gentlemen are infected.¹⁴

It is difficult to judge the accuracy of this polemic from surviving published works, which touch on a range of themes including usury and charity. A snapshot

¹² F. Harvey (ed.), *The Breviary of Suffolk by Robert Reyce [vere Ryece], 1618* (London, 1902), p.21; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.347.

¹³ John Knewstub, *An aunsweare unto certaine assertions, tending to maintaine the church of Rome to bee the true and catholique church* (1579), sig.¶3^r (Epistle). Cf. the epistles prefacing Robert Allen, *A treasurie of catechisme, or Christian instruction* (1600) and Allen, *The doctrine of the Gospel* (1606) [both to Sir Nicholas Bacon and his wife Anne]; Nicholas Bownd, *A treatise ful of consolation for all that are afflicted in minde* (Cambridge, 1608) [to Sir Henry Warner and his wife Francis] and Bownd, *The unbeleefe of S. Thomas the Apostle, laid open for the comfort of all that desire to beleefe* (Cambridge, 1608) [to Sir Robert Gardiner and his wife Anne].

¹⁴ A. Peel (ed.), *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft* (Cambridge, 1953), p.72.

of the famous combination lecture at Bury, however, suggests that the issue to cause greatest controversy in the late sixteenth century was not the proper use of wealth but the proper observance of the sabbath. Following his exclusion from the lecture in 1589, the anti-puritan Thomas Rogers attacked the dangerous opinions and discipline of the 'schismaticall brethren' and 'sabbatarians', whom he later derogatively referred to as 'the Cambridg boies'.¹⁵ Rogers thus saw the sabbatarian principles of the men around him as a means of challenging episcopal power. The godly, on the other hand, tended to view the sanctification of the sabbath as 'virtually infallible proof of elect status'.¹⁶ As we shall see, it is possible to discern in Carter's texts a discursive shift away from the prioritisation of sabbath observance as the essence of godly self-identification and within this, perhaps, an implied critique of the preoccupations of the second generation of 'Cambridge boies'.¹⁷

The extent of clerical dependence on the good will of lay patrons of course varied according to circumstance. In this respect – and with respect to the large number of livings in lay hands by the early seventeenth century – Suffolk of course reflected broader trends in the post-Reformation church.¹⁸ We are fortunate in the case of this region, however, to be able to discern something of

¹⁵ J. Craig, 'The 'Cambridge Boies': Thomas Rogers and the 'Brethren' in Bury St Edmunds', in Wabuda and Litzenberger (eds.), *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, pp.154-76. For the origins and development of the Bury combination lecture see P. Collinson, 'Lectures by Combination: Structures and Characteristics of Church Life in 17th-Century England', in Collinson, *Godly People*, p.477).

¹⁶ Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities', p.100. For the definitive statement of sabbatarian principles see Bownd, *The doctrine of the Sabbath*.

¹⁷ A snapshot of this group's cohesion is provided in the dedicatory preface to Timothy Oldmayne's, *God's rebuke in taking from us that worthy and honourable Gentleman Sir Edward Lewkenor Knight* (1619)). The sermon was dedicated to a number of local clergy who had attended Emmanuel college around the same time as Oldmayne and to Laurence Chaderton, master of Emmanuel, and Samuel Ward, master of Sidney Sussex.

¹⁸ Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.54. Not all counties were dominated by lay patronage to the same extent. Cf. D. MacCulloch, 'Catholic and Puritan in Elizabethan Suffolk: A County Community Polarises', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 72 (1981), 281n, where it is pointed out that in

the variety of clerical experience, through a survey carried out into the conditions of livings in 1603. The most economically vulnerable ministers in the west of Suffolk (the archdeaconry of Sudbury) were those in the twenty-four perpetual curacies, whose income was entirely dependent on the impropriator of the living.¹⁹ Vicars enjoyed more security in theory but in practice could find their independence hampered by disadvantageous tithe agreements. The tithe income of rectors, meanwhile, could be threatened by the power of a resident patron. In 1620 Henry Mitchell, rector of Redgrave, deposed that there were 200 acres of arable and pasture land within Sir Nicholas Bacon's park, for which 'no tithes are payed nor heretofore have bene payed'. It is also probable that Bacon was receiving a portion of tithes and a yearly pension from Culford, where he was the manorial lord and patron of the living, even though this benefice was a rectory.²⁰ As this example suggests, a reputation as 'a Christian, and a professor of the Gospel' did not guarantee generosity, or diligence in the choice of ministers. This phrase was used by Nicholas Bownd to describe Sir Henry Warner, but Warner appointed a non-resident and perhaps non-graduate minister to the vicarage at Mildenhall, which was both his own place of residence and one of the largest parishes in the county.²¹

The dominance of the gentry in Suffolk's godly community did not go entirely unchallenged. In particular, the townsmen of Bury achieved greater independence from the local puritan gentry as the town moved towards its

west Sussex, 'relatively free of Puritanism', only 39 out of 81 advowsons were in lay hands in the late sixteenth century.

¹⁹ 'Conditions of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury' [Sudbury Archdeaconry].

²⁰ PRO E 178/4547, m.3: Tithes concealed in Redgrave Park; *CSPD 1540-41*, p.580 (record of a grant of a portion of tithes and a yearly pension 'as the late abbey enjoyed' to the lord of the manor of Culford in 1541). For the suggestion that prescriptive *modi* were often imposed on tithes on enclosed or imparked land see Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.95.

²¹ Bownd, *A treatise ful of consolation*, sig.¶2^r (Epistle); Norf.RO DN/REG/31, p.1283; DN/VIS/4/3, fo.47^r; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp.327-38, 336.

eventual incorporation in 1614. By this time, a godly group was firmly in control of the crucial civic institutions of the guildhall and grammar school. Influential gentlemen such as Jermyn, Higham and Bacon were not, however, prepared to rescind their jurisdictional rights without a fight. In 1601 they had successfully petitioned the privy council to prevent Bury's 'mechanicall and trades men' from gaining their charter, and even as late as 1623 Bacon was still insisting on his right to exercise criminal jurisdiction as lessee of the liberty.²² The conflict between the gentry's interests and those of the town's corporation became apparent in more subtle ways too. In 1614 Jermyn bequeathed £20 to the corporation only 'after they shall have so governed their youthe and poore' by setting them on work, 'soe as they may at noe tyme come to breake downe and carry awaye gates, stiles, pales, wood and hedges out of any groundes nowe in my possession'.²³ John Craig has drawn attention to the 'important differences in rank, status and, above all, political interest', which helped make the 'puritanism' of the Bury townsmen 'a radical force, more critical of the status quo and more willing to effect change' than that of the gentry.²⁴

I.ii. Wealth, Influence and Piety: Two Case Studies

These communities of godliness in Suffolk provide part of the contextual backdrop for Carter's published sermons. The last of these was preached at Clare and it is to some extent with this in mind that we turn our attention to two gentry families with seats in the vicinity of this town: the Barnardistons of Keddington

²² MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp.329-30.

²³ PCC 56 Law. The gentry-inspired 'orders' of 1589 also specified the incarceration of hedge-breakers (Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.47).

²⁴ J. Craig, *Reformation, Politics and Polemics: The Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610* (Aldershot, 2001), pp.126, 131.

and the Soames of Little Thurlow. The Barnardistons were one of the wealthiest families in west Suffolk – by the beginning of the seventeenth century their estate were worth in excess of £4,000 – and could trace their roots here back to the twelfth century.²⁵ Three generations of the family concern us in the present context: Sir Thomas Barnardiston the elder (d.1619) resided first at the family's seat in Keddington and then with his second wife in the impressive priory in Clare, which was valued at over £300. His son Thomas (d.1610), lived in a grand mansion in the populous clothworking parish of Witham (Essex), whence he collected the rectorial tithes. This was also the residence of his eldest son Nathaniel (d.1653), until the latter inherited the Barnardiston estate at Keddington on his grandfather's death in 1619.²⁶ The Barnardistons enjoyed both material wealth and a reputation for godliness. In the years following Nathaniel's death, moreover, the name of Barnardiston became associated with a patriotic fervour for the cause of true religion and liberty.²⁷ These riches and reputation were supplemented by a series of advantageous marriages. Sir Thomas the elder's second wife was Anne Bigrave, known as 'the blind', who was an active patron of puritan ministers and regular correspondent with the godly d'Ewes family in the early 1640s. The advantages to be gained from this marriage are suggested by the fact that a rival claimant to Lady Ann's hand from the London

²⁵ R. Almack, 'Keddington alias Ketton, and the Barnardiston Family', *PSIA* 4 (1874), pp.134-35, 158; BL Add. MS 19116, fo.537; BL Add. MS 15520 fo.65^r.

²⁶ J. Gyford, *Witham, 1500-1700: Making a Living* (Witham, 1996), p.175; J. Gyford, *Public Spirit: Dissent in Witham and Essex, 1500-1700* (Witham, 1999), p.72; K.W. Barnardiston, *Clare Priory: Seven Centuries of a Suffolk House* (Cambridge, 1962), pp.30-33; White, *Suffolk*, p.725. The mansion at Witham was leased from the recusant John Southcott, whose family had extended the agricultural land at Witham to around 350 acres.

²⁷ For a contemporary testament to this reputation see Samuel Fairclough, *Suffolks tears: or Elegies on that renowned knight Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston. A gentleman eminent for piety to God, love to the Church, and fidelity to his Country; and therefore Highly honored by them all* (1653). For the characterisation of Nathaniel in the nineteenth century as a 'great champion of civil liberty' and 'an unflinching patriot' see Almack, 'Keddington and the Barnardiston Family', p.139.

branch of the Barnardiston family was still pursuing his claim some fourteen years after the marriage of Thomas and Ann had taken place.²⁸ Sir Thomas the younger was first married to Mary Knightley, daughter of the godly Northamptonshire gentleman Sir Richard Knightley. His second marriage provided the beginnings of an alliance with the Soame family, a connection which was cemented with the marriage of Nathaniel to Jane Soame in 1613. This match was accompanied by a substantial dowry and the loan of around £1000 to Nathaniel from Jane's father, Sir Stephen Soame.²⁹

Contemporary celebrations of Nathaniel's Barnardiston's life narrate both the micro- and macro-histories of his puritan activism. He was praised for the apparently successful 'reformation of manners', which he and the minister Samuel Fairclough effected in Keddington from the late 1620s, and for his godly household and private devotions.³⁰ On a national scale he was active in opposition to Ship Money and a staunch supporter of the parliamentary cause in the 1640s. Even Samuel Fairclough's hagiographical account of his patron's life could not, however, gloss over an unfortunate lapse in religious devotion on the part of Nathaniel's grandfather. Despite being brought up as a ward of Sir John Cheke and then being educated in Geneva under Calvin himself, Fairclough

²⁸ BL Harl. MS 384, fo.27; Harl. MS 284, fos.20-27; PRO STAC 8/75/18; K.W. Shipps, 'Lay Patronage of East Anglian Puritan Clerics in Pre-Revolutionary England' (Yale University Ph.D. Thesis, 1971), pp.92-93. For Sir Thomas' successful petitioning of the king in 1605 to gain support for the lawfulness of his marriage to Anne, against the claims of precontract, see Almack, 'Keddington and the Barnardiston Family', p.135.

²⁹ CSPD 1636-37, p.545; SROB 613/858; FL 639/11/1 (Copy of Sir Stephen Soame's will, 1617). Sir Thomas Barnardiston married Katherine Soame, née Banks, the daughter of a wealthy London lawyer, in 1599. She had previously been married to Bartholomew Soame (*Public Spirit: Dissent in Witham and Essex*, p.72).

³⁰ Samuel Clarke, *The lives of sundry eminent persons in this later age* (1683), pp.111, 114, 169.

admitted that Sir Thomas Barnardiston the elder ‘failed to live according to that Education in some part of his Life’.³¹

In contrast to the Barnardistons, the Soame family had only recently made its mark on Suffolk’s landowning élite. As the younger son of a Norfolk gentleman, Sir Stephen Soame (d.1619) had made his fortune in long-distance wholesale trade. He was a member of the Company of Grocers, rising to become Lord of the Staple (a prime position from which to make profitable investments abroad) and eventually became Lord Mayor of London in 1598. Soame’s father had purchased the manor of Little Thurlow in 1582 and it was here that Sir Stephen commissioned the building of an impressive mansion and gardens. Soame’s substantial public works both here and in London were his chief legacy. In Little Thurlow he erected an almshouse for eight aged inhabitants and endowed a free school for promising scholars in the local community. These last ventures in particular bear the hallmarks of godly bequests: the almsfolk were to be ‘of honnest life and conversacion’, to hear prayers twice a day and to attend church twice on Sundays and on holy days on pain of the forfeiture of a week’s allowance. Soame urged his son to be mindful of ‘this small worke’ after his death so that both he and the almsfolk might ‘bee partakers of [God’s] heavenly kingdome’. Ostentatious charity was also to accompany his funeral at Little Thurlow’s church, at which ‘[e]verie poore man’ in the village was to receive ‘a coate, there dinners and 12d in money’.³²

³¹ Barnardiston, *Clare Priory*, p.31; Clarke, *The lives of sundry eminent persons*, pp.109-10.

³² BL Add. MS 19103, fo.268^r; SROB FL 639/11/1, pp.3-7, 22; *VCH Suffolk*, II, p.348. For the post-Reformation growth in endowments of almshouses and similar regulations see W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of rural England, 1480-1660: The Aspirations and the Achievements of the Rural Society*. (London, 1961), *passim* and especially pp.40-49. For a similar endowment in Suffolk by William Gardiner of Elmswell in 1619 see White, *Suffolk*, p.685.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century Soame had begun to purchase further manors across Suffolk. With his vast estates in this county and others, he became one of the richest landowners in the region. By the time of his death he was worth at least £6,000 in lands and £40,000 in goods.³³ He also used the marriages of his children to integrate his family into Suffolk's godly élite, securing alliances with three men who were leaders of the puritan cause from the 1620s.³⁴ Soame's control over the local ministry increased as he gained the advowsons of at least five Suffolk benefices. Not all of the appointments he made lived up to godly ideals, however. In 1616 he appointed William Withers, a pluralist, to the profitable rectory of Wetheringsett. Withers was an educated cleric, but one who supplemented his income by acting as a medical practitioner, faced accusations of simony, and was eventually sequestered in 1643.³⁵ In the same year, Soame appointed William Whitby to the rectory of Earl Stonham, a cleric who was also sequestered in the 1640s 'for several great misdemeanours'.³⁶

The intention of the foregoing survey has been to examine the broad allegiances, changing profile, and priorities of some of the most prominent 'professors' in the west of Suffolk. Some of these figures will be encountered again in the following section, as we consider the manifestations and effects of

³³ *CSPD 1619-23*, p.49. By the time he drew up his will, Soame had come into possession of the Suffolk manors of Earl Stonham (c.1594), Freckenham (1600), Wetheringsett (1600), and Herringswell (c.1600) [See Map 1, p.232]. He also had land in Hundon and Little Wratting and various estates in Norfolk, Cambridge, Essex, Kent and Hertfordshire, alongside property in the capital. (Cf. SROB FL 639/11/1; W.A. Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk: Notes on their History and Devolution* (7 vols., London, 1905-11), II-V; 'Conditions of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury'; BL Add. MS 19095, fo.122').

³⁴ These men were Nathaniel Barnardiston, Calthrope Parker and John Wentworth. For their part in puritan opposition from the 1620s to the 1640s see Shipps, 'Lay Patronage of East Anglian Clerics', chs. 2-4.

³⁵ Norf.RO DN/REG/16 Bk.22, fo.48'; B.R.A.160/1; DN/CON/12; Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p.348.

³⁶ Norf.RO DN/REG/31, Bk.22, fo.47'; Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p.347.

economic change on this region. Particular attention will also be paid to the industrial, agrarian and welfare economies in the town of Clare, where Carter preached his controversial lecture, and in the village of Cavenham, where he pursued his pastoral ministry.

II AGRARIAN AND INDUSTRIAL ECONOMIES

II.i. Enclosure and Improvement

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Suffolk landscape was dominated by the so-called 'Woodland' area. The heavy soils here gave rise to a wood-pasture economy, characterised by 'manifold enclosures', small hamlets and dispersed farms devoted primarily to dairy farming. The dense populations and lack of common resources in the south of this area had helped the development of clothing towns such as Clare.³⁷ Carter's living of Cavenham, by contrast, was situated within a sheep-corn area known as the 'Fielding', which stretched from Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket up to Thetford. Manorial control here was strong, not least due to the operation of the foldcourse in this region. This was a custom peculiar to Norfolk and Suffolk, whereby the manorial lord or his lessees enjoyed exclusive rights to pasture sheep over the open fields. It dominated the farming routine of the village since the land set aside in any given year for the foldcourse might equally belong to manorial tenants as to the lord himself. The pressure for enclosure in these areas therefore came not from the landowners but

³⁷ Ryece, *Breviary of Suffolk*, p.178; *AHEW*, IV, pp.46-48; J. Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England* (London, 1984), pp.122-23.

from the tenants, who were keen to exempt their land from the inconvenience of the foldcourse system.³⁸

Although there was, therefore, a lack of seigneurial enclosure in this county, ambitious building projects or the restriction of access to once common resources could nevertheless threaten the livelihood of the poor and the maintenance of the clergy. We have already seen how Bacon's emparkment caused a reduction in tithe income and how Jermyn – whose house and park at Rushbrooke were built and extended from the 1550s onwards – was keen to protect the woods in his park from gleaning by the poor.³⁹ It is likely that other gentlemen resident near Bury were similarly disposed to take measures to prevent pilfering, given that this 'Fielding' area suffered from a widespread shortage of timber.⁴⁰ Whilst such pressure was less applicable to the wood pasture zone, this area was not exempt from agrarian improvement. By 1613 Little Thurlow had witnessed several exchanges of pieces of land between the rector on the one hand and Stephen Soame and George LeHunt on the other. One piece of land had lain within one of the parish fields but was 'now taken into the parke' and another had been 'lately inclosed' by Soame's son Thomas.⁴¹

³⁸ MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', 54-55. For the political and economic sensitivity of the foldcourse throughout the sixteenth century see R.W. Hoyle, 'Agrarian Agitation in Mid-sixteenth-century Norfolk: A Petition of 1553', *HJ* 44:1 (March 2001), 223-38, especially 225, 231-32. The pattern of tenant-led enclosure continued into the seventeenth century: of eight offenders noted by enclosure commissioners in 1609 as having reformed their offences, seven were yeomen and one was styled 'esquire' (HMC, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable Marquess of Salisbury, preserved at Hatfield House, Herfordshire* (24 vols., London, 1970), XXI, p.91).

³⁹ See above, p.188. For the improvements at Rushbrooke see PCC 33 Powell (will of Sir Thomas Jermyn, 1552) and White, *Suffolk*, p.315. For the increasing concern over illicit fuel gathering from the late sixteenth century see Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.43-47.

⁴⁰ Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.47. The enclosure of waste grounds by Sir Robert Drury at Thurston (near Bury), which were the subject of an exchequer suit brought by his tenants in 1607, may well have been prompted by a desire to protect limited timber (PRO E 134/4 James I/Michaelmas 15).

⁴¹ SROB E 14/4/1 (Little Thurlow Glebe Terrier). For further evidence of Soame's attempt to gain greater control over the manor see SROB HA 540/37 (deed recording the purchase of small pieces of land to ensure the rents went directly to Soame himself) and W.A. Copinger, *The*

II.ii. Clare and the Cloth Industry

A number of the main clothworking centres of Suffolk were situated in the south-west of the county. Towns such as Sudbury and swollen villages such as Long Melford and Lavenham formed part of a coherent economic region that extended across the border into Essex. The cloth industry was prone to periodic crises due to its dependence on foreign markets and on London mercantile capital. The misfortune of even a single individual could have a devastating domino effect on other merchants and local clothiers. A crisis of this kind in 1619 caused 'many Thousandes of poore people, whose livinges of them selves & their families, depende upon their trade . . . to be brought into greate extremities'. This short-term disruption was merely one episode in the terminal decline of Suffolk's broadcloth industry.⁴² The employment practices in this trade had been roundly criticised some fifteen years earlier in Thomas Carew's *Caveat for clothiers*. By 1622 the county magistrates suggested that clothiers had over four thousand 'broade clothes which doe lye upon their handes . . . for wante of utterance & sale' and estimated a loss of over £30,000 in the previous five years.⁴³

In the late sixteenth century, Suffolk towns in the Stour valley, including Sudbury and Clare, responded to this decline in the broadcloth industry by beginning the manufacture of 'new draperies'. Contemporaries agreed that this trade offered more just rewards for spinners and weavers. Carew claimed

County of Suffolk. Its History as Disclosed by Existing Records and other Documents, being Materials for the History of Suffolk (5 vols., London, 1904-6), IV, p.451.

⁴² PRO SP 14/109/126; SP 14/128/67; B.E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642* (Cambridge, 1970), pp.53, 82. The history of the cloth industry in Suffolk is summarised in G. Unwin, 'Woollen Cloth – The Old Draperies', and 'The New Draperies, Woolcombing and Spinning', in *VCH Suffolk*, II, pp.254-71. See also G. Unwin, 'The History of the Cloth Industry in Suffolk', in R.H. Tawney (ed.), *Studies in Economic History: The Collected Papers of George Unwin* (London, 1958), pp.262-301.

⁴³ Carew, 'A caveat for clothiers'; PRO SP 14/109/126.

that 'those that spin Dutch worke do earne more then they can in Blew worke'. It was even claimed by one commentator early in James' reign that 'these people, are masters in their trade and work for themselves'.⁴⁴ The long-term picture, however, was one of an increase in unapprenticed, unregulated labour and a continued sensitivity to conjunctural crises. Even before the first real depression in the new draperies in 1622, the governors of towns such as Sudbury recognised the dangers of dependence on a single trade and sought to regulate clothmaking in the town. The large numbers involved in the petitioning and riots that accompanied the more serious crisis of 1629-31 demonstrate the potential for collective action among the workers in a trade that combined extensive division of labour across a wide area with a relatively unsupervised working environment.⁴⁵

In Clare itself the effects of these developments in the cloth trade can be seen in the increase of the labouring population and subsequent pressure on common resources. The town's population roughly doubled to over 1000 during the seventeenth century. By the 1670s its social structure, like that of many clothworking towns, reflected the co-existence of a few wealthy clothiers with large numbers of their employees. In 1674 over 50 per cent of the town's households were exempt from the hearth tax, whilst at the other extreme three of the town's richest inhabitants owned houses with twenty-three, fourteen and

⁴⁴ J.E. Pilgrim, 'The rise of the 'New Draperies' in Essex', *University of Birmingham Journal* 7 (1959), 44, 51; Carew, 'A caveat for clothiers', sig.X1^r; PRO SP 14/80/13.

⁴⁵ J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.253n [Sudbury regulations], 272. For the distress and riots that proceeded from the crisis in 1629-31 and the concerns of local magistrates at this time see PRO SP 16/146/57; B.W. Quintrell, *The Maynard Lieutenancy Book 1608-1639* (Chelmsford, 1993), pp.252-70; J. Walter, 'Grain Riots and Popular Attitudes to the Law: Maldon and the Crisis of 1629', in J. Brewer and J. Styles (eds.), *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1980), pp.47-84.

thirteen hearths.⁴⁶ The town's resources were stretched in providing for increasing numbers of poor. In 1610 (not a crisis year) about 14 per cent of inhabitants were in receipt of formal poor relief and only 22 per cent of these were widows. These rates were supplemented by distributions of foodstuff and fuel to the tune of around £10 per year and of course by numerous individual bequests to the poor in the wills of local inhabitants.⁴⁷ A further source of poor relief in Clare – and an important resource for small farmers – was the sixty-two acres of common pasture granted by the crown in 1534. The profits derived from letting this land to the poorer farmers in Clare went to the town's labouring and impotent poor. Like other cloth towns in the region, Clare experienced a struggle over this common resource in the early seventeenth century.⁴⁸ An attempt in 1609 to sell parcels of the pasture was opposed by the 'porest people and inhabitants in Clare', who claimed that not only were the purchasers 'men of abilitye', but also that individual ownership of enclosed land was 'to the greate impoverishing of the towne for the poore have no assuerance of any thinge'. In this dispute, it was not the Corporation but rather prominent county magistrates – Sir Thomas Barnardison the elder, Sir William Waldegrave and Sir John Higham – who were implicated in the original purchase of the land from the king's farmer and in its attempted sale. Although the dispute was resolved in favour of 'the

⁴⁶ S.H.A. Hervey, *Suffolk in 1674: Being the Hearth Tax Returns* (SGB 10, Woodbridge, 1905), p.74. Population figures drawn from 'Conditions of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury', p.30 (380 communicants = around 570 inhabitants using multiplier of 1.5) and *Compton Census*, p.232 (500 Conformists, 300 Nonconformists = 1200 inhabitants using 1.5 multiplier). Cf. *Compton Census*, p.lxvii for the use of this multiplier to determine population size from the number of communicants.

⁴⁷ SROB FL 501/7/39 [distributions to the poor, 1609-1611]; FL 501/7/38 [disbursements to the poor, June 1561]; FL 501/7/40 [supplies in kind]; G.A. Thornton, *A History of Clare, Suffolk* (Cambridge, 1928), p.189 [wills].

⁴⁸ Cf. the struggle between the Corporation and the freeburgesses over the town fields in Colchester from the late sixteenth century, discussed in Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, pp.77-81.

poor', the inhabitants nevertheless had to pay £200 to the crown for the perpetuation of the grant. It is perhaps because of this that the number of poor who were relieved out of this charity was apparently drastically reduced in the years after this dispute.⁴⁹

By the time Carter preached his sermon in Clare, social relations in Suffolk's cloth industry were finely balanced between the traditional expectations of paternalism and the more disturbing spectre of a form of class solidarity among weavers and spinners across a large economic region. Whilst clothworkers were willing to criticise the uncharitable conduct of clothiers who had 'growne rich' by their labours, they rarely identified their own exploitation with that of other wage labourers. Within the trade itself, despite the divergent fortunes of both employers and employees, conflict was structured by the 'differential relationship of clothier and workers to the means of production'.⁵⁰ Collective protest, however, was most commonly linked to periods of conjuctural crisis, when it was targeted at cornbrokers, the source of 'dearth without scarcity'.⁵¹

II.iii. Cavenham: Conflict and Community

The iconography of Cavenham church testifies to the agrarian preoccupations of this village: among the images are a wall painting of St. Walston, who came to

⁴⁹ SROB FL 501/11/331 [petition from the poor] FL 501/361 [purchase by Barnardiston etc.]. In 1609 it was claimed that 144 of Clare's poor 'have used to be relieved' by the profits of the pasture (SROB FL 501/11/398) but two years later only forty-three persons received payments from this source (FL 501/7/39: 'Destributed for the comon pastor to the poor of clare').

⁵⁰ BL Add. MS 39245, fos.51, 52; Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, pp.267, 269, 271. For the varied economic status of both clothiers and weavers see P. Collinson, 'Christian Socialism in Elizabethan Suffolk: Thomas Carew and his *Caveat for Clothiers*', in C. Rawcliffe, R. Virgoe, and R. Wilson (eds.), *Counties and Communities: Essays on East Anglian History* (Norwich, 1996), p.168.

⁵¹ Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, p.61; Walter, 'Crisis of 1629', *passim*.

be associated with ploughmen, and two reliefs of rabbits. In the sixteenth century, most of the tenants would have been engaged primarily in arable farming on the open fields, whilst the fur produced from the cony warrens on Suffolk's sandy soils provided a useful subsidiary income for those with enough surplus capital to build a warren and pay for its management. There were two main sources of conflict in this region: unprotected cony warrens, which could cause destruction to the common fields, and the foldcourse rights pertaining to the manorial lord.⁵² It is possible that a dispute over the latter was behind an incident in Cavenham in the first phases of the 'commotion time' of 1549. A group of labourers from Cavenham were sent to the Tower after they had gathered together to draw up a petition to the king about destruction of their corn by two local men. Although the examinations give only cursory information, we may speculate that the two local men were lessees of the lord's foldcourse rights, and that the 'labourers' were tenants who had enclosed land to protect their corn.⁵³

Despite this moment of distinction for a small Suffolk village (no other incidents are recorded in Suffolk in the Spring of 1549), early seventeenth-century Cavenham did not experience the social strains common to clothworking towns such as Clare. It had no industrial economy or resident lord – the sole manorial lord, the head of the Lewkenor family, lived at nearby Denham – so that the wealth of its inhabitants was not intensely polarised, nor did its

⁵² 'Kett's demands being in rebellion', p.144 (no.23 '[We praye that no man under] the degre of [esquye] shall kepe any conyes upon any of ther owne frehold or copiehold onles he pale them in so that it shall not be to the comons noysoyns').

⁵³ PRO SP 10/9/48. One of the accused described his corn as 'beinge every yeres land', suggesting that it might have been exempt from the regular foldcourse custom. Neither of the two men against whom the petition was drawn up appear on the subsidy return of 1529, whilst one of the 'labourers', Robert Capp, may be the same Capp assessed at £3 in goods on this return. For further examples of foldcourse disputes becoming mixed up in the stirs of 1549 see MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.29.

population expand on the same scale as that of Clare. Thus a population of around 120 inhabitants in 1603 had only risen by about 29 per cent by 1676.⁵⁴ Surviving wills and glebe terriers nevertheless suggest that over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the more prosperous farmers were engaged in exchanging or simply engrossing the land of smaller tenants. By 1633 the names of three farmers dominate the picture of land ownership in Cavenham's fields.⁵⁵ In the early seventeenth century a number of local yeomen had also become lessees of the lord's foldcourse rights and farmers of his rents. Although most landlords were by this time compensating tenants whose land suffered from the foldcourse, this custom nevertheless remained a potential source of tension, especially for tenants dependent on a small amount of arable land.

One way in which tensions between the inhabitants themselves might be defused was through the provision of alms, a subject central to Carter's final published sermon. Because Cavenham had no resident gentry family, it was the yeomen of the parish who were best placed to offer paternalistic charity to their less fortunate neighbours. Some wills suggest the survival of funeral doles into the early seventeenth century, though these and other charitable bequests are freighted with the language of 'discretion'.⁵⁶ Carter's predecessor, John Southouse, on the other hand, directed that his bequest of £5 was 'equallie to be

⁵⁴ 'Conditions of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury' [Sudbury Archdeaconry], p.17; *Compton Census*, p.231. Twenty-five taxpayers are listed in the 1523-24 subsidy assessment, eighteen of whom were assessed on goods ranging from £1 to £6. The remaining seven were assessed on wages of £1 (S.H.A. Hervey, *Suffolk in 1524, being the return for a subsidy granted in 1523* (SGB 10, Woodbridge, 1903), p.229). This structure of wealth was fairly typical of the hundred of Lackford, in which Cavenham was situated, an area which was never economically prosperous enough to attract many gentry families in the sixteenth century (cf. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp.286-87).

⁵⁵ See, for example, SROB IC 500/2/41/92 (will of John Symonds, yeoman, 1587); IC 500/2/41/409 (will of John Gibbon, yeoman, 1589); SROB 806/1/35 (Cavenham Glebe Terrier, 1633).

⁵⁶ SROB IC 500/2/52/6; PCC 40 Soame; PRO C 93/6/13, m.7.

devided betwixt' Cavenham's poor. Aside from promoting the posthumous reputation of the donor, these bequests, and the other small endowments held by the parish, are likely to have supplemented rather than directly subsidised more formal collections or rates.⁵⁷ The principal kind of informal charitable provision discussed in Carter's sermon was the duty to provide for elderly kin, a doctrine which reproved 'those that eyther relieve not their parents at all, or else doe it after . . . a niggardly and repining manner'.⁵⁸ Whilst it is difficult to comment substantially on attitudes towards elderly parents in Carter's own parish, it is clear that some male testators in Cavenham insisted on their children's duty of care towards a widowed mother. Among the Cavenham wills made between 1559 and 1640 are three which bestow land and appurtenances on an eldest child but determine that 'Convenient house room' or a chamber in the house be given to the surviving widow. It is notable that two of these testators were labourers and one a shepherd, whose children were perhaps not especially well equipped to provide for both their aged mother and their own families.⁵⁹ The majority of testators bestowed land and houses on wives for the course of their natural lives before these went to a single heir or were divided between a number of children. We might ask how far widows were in a position to enforce these provisions once the children had families of their own to support. One inhabitant anticipated this problem by allowing land to pass to his sons at the age of twenty-one but requiring them to give their mother yearly bushells of rye and barley. Another

⁵⁷ PCC 93 Capell. For evidence of a bequest of a small piece of land providing around 8d a year by the beginning of the seventeenth century see BL Add. MS 19095, fo.61^r. For seventeenth-century stipulations that bequests should be administered separately from, and not subsidise formal rates see Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.142-46.

⁵⁸ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.41.

⁵⁹ SROB IC 500/2/58/384; IC 500/2/46/205; IC 500/2/48/121.

divided his small holding between his two sons, but allowed his wife ‘the use of these lands for life’.⁶⁰

The available evidence therefore supplies us with a picture of a diverse regional economy, which presented a variety of opportunities for agrarian improvement both for tenants and for manorial lords. Economic life in the south-west of the county was dominated by a declining cloth industry. Although Clare was one of the few Suffolk towns to adopt the new methods of production that were said to bring improved conditions for workers, it continued to experience the structural poverty that was endemic to the trade. Carter’s own parish of Cavenham appears not to have been characterised by extremes of wealth but nevertheless incorporated divergent interests. In the following section we consider how Carter’s own interests and priorities interacted with this local environment. This provides the backdrop for an analysis of Carter’s second published sermon, *The wise king and the learned judge*.

III PREACHING IN THE PARISH

III.i. Preacher as Pastor

Carter’s pastoral career displays many of the features typical of the Jacobean Calvinist preacher. Educated at Cambridge, he returned to the county of his birth and was preferred to a benefice by a well-known lay patron of godly and learned clergy. He was promoted only once in his lifetime, an advancement that was also secured through the head of an influential godly family. He continued to cement alliances with the godly élite until his death, naming ‘my kinde frend John Sache

⁶⁰ SROB IC 500/2/42/433; IC 500/2/56/461.

gen[t].’ as supervisor of his will. He claimed to have spent most of his time at Cavenham in ‘Sabboth dayes paines, my weekeday Lecture, teaching children, and other imployments’.⁶¹ Carter’s true ambition, however, lay in being able to devote his time to study. In the epistle to a prospective patron in *Christ his last will*, he suggested that his publications might be augmented if ‘God shall please hereafter, to rayse me up such competency of meanes that I may without further distractions follow my private studies’.⁶² His time apart from his flock was not spent solely in theological contemplation, however. Like many a minister with a family to provide for – Carter had seven children in all – he sought out opportunities to augment his income and secure an inheritance.⁶³ Two years prior to his death he joined with his father in purchasing a piece of land, an investment which he expected to yield £10 a year in the form of portions given by his heir to the other four surviving children. Not all of his enterprises lived up to high standards of moral probity. In 1623 he loaned money to an impoverished farmer on condition of having the reversion of his lands and shops until the debt was repaid. This was a form of usury – an attempt to obtain interest indirectly through the use and profits of a borrower’s goods and lands – systematically repudiated by commentators such as Gabriel Powell.⁶⁴ By the end of his life, Carter was comfortably off, if not especially wealthy, having accumulated goods to the value of around £45. He had not, however, achieved his stated ambition of being able to devote his life to contemplation: his inventory is that of a clergyman

⁶¹ Carter, *Christ his last will*, sig.A2^r (Epistle); Norf.RO O.W. 126 (Will of Bezaleel Carter, 1629). The will is transcribed in *Little Whelnetham Parish Registers*, pp.259-60, from which the following quotations and references are taken.

⁶² Carter, *Christ his last will*, sig.A2^r (Epistle).

⁶³ SROB FL 547/4/1 (Cavenham Parish Registers). Carter’s three daughters and four sons were born between September 1615 and February 1625. Bezaleel outlived two of his sons.

⁶⁴ Will of Bezaleel Carter, p.259; Gabriel Powell, *Theologicall and Scholasticall positions concerning usury* (1602), cited in R.L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, 1981), p.603.

dividing his time between learning and farming, with books to the value of £5 and animals and corn worth around £11.⁶⁵

In Cavenham itself, Carter was very much dependent on the grace and favour of his patron, Sir Edward Lewkenor of Denham. The living itself was valued at only £5 5s 5d in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, making it one of the poorest livings in Sudbury archdeaconry. By the early eighteenth century it was worth around £30 and qualified for a £100 share of Queen Anne's Bounty.⁶⁶ It is likely that Lewkenor restored part or all of the glebe land and great tithes to the living in order that it might support a learned clergyman and his family.⁶⁷ Carter may also have been given informal gifts from Lewkenor on visits to Denham and a stipend for his weekday lecture in the parish. Lewkenor's death in 1618, however, may have threatened any informal arrangements of this kind. As vicar, Carter would also have received the small tithes on wool – including the lord's flock – and crops, which were probably received in kind here in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁸

As to Carter's relationship with the rest of his parishioners, it is difficult to glean anything more than impressionistic evidence. It may be significant that, unlike earlier occupants of the living, Carter received no mention, either as beneficiary or witness, in any of his parishioners' wills. Perhaps this was due in some part to a perceived remissness in his performance of the traditional

⁶⁵ Norf.RO DN/Inv/35/210.

⁶⁶ 'Conditions of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury', p.17; Norf.RO B.R.A.160/1 (Valuation of Benefices, C16th); SROB 806/1/35 (Cavenham Glebe Terrier, 1706); SROB FL 547/3/5 (Cavenham Glebe Terrier, 1758).

⁶⁷ Given the low value of the vicarage, it is highly probable that the glebe land of sixty-four acres, with which the living was nominally endowed, had previously been alienated to the impropriation, thus depriving the vicar of all but five acres of land, which adjoined the vicarage. The value of the living therefore probably includes only small tithes. For the restoration of tithes to Robert Pricke by Lewkenor's father at Denham see Collinson, 'Magistracy and Ministry', p.460.

⁶⁸ SROB 806/1/35; PRO E 134/19 Elizabeth/Hilary 5.

neighbourly duties of hospitality, visiting the sick and resolving of disputes. Certainly, the one glimpse we have into Carter's self-presentation as a pastor suggests a focus on the work of explicating and teaching the Word. His concentration on these duties, however, may have had something to do with financial prudence: with a large family to support and no other benefice to augment his income, the opportunities for liberal hospitality would have been somewhat limited.⁶⁹ We should not assume, in any case, that a pastoral style focused on preaching was universally opposed. One parishioner, John Cosen, bequeathed £20 to Carter's immediate predecessor, Timothy Oldmayne, a renowned godly preaching minister.⁷⁰ It is likely that Cosen was one member of a core of 'hotter' protestants in the parish, who supported and attended the parish lecture. Whilst the priorities and activism of this group were likely to have made them distinct from the rest of the parishioners, the extent of this distance is a moot point. The parish had, after all, experienced a learned preaching ministry from at least 1590 and there is little evidence, in probate material at least, of widespread resistance to the solefidean emphasis on the saving grace of Christ.⁷¹

It was at the Cavenham lecture that Carter preached *The wise king and the learned judge*. The published sermon was primarily dedicated to Lewkenor's widow, as 'a picture at all times to put you in mind of his godly life and conversation . . . in these perilous and luke-warm times, when zeale growes

⁶⁹ Cf. the experience of John Southouse, vicar of Cavenham from 1590 to 1613, who was also prebend of Lincoln (1579-1613). He had no children and was wealthy enough to have his will proved at Canterbury (PCC 93 Capell). In this will, as well as his bequest to Cavenham's poor, he left numerous bequests to his servants and discharged three local men of their debts. He also appeared as witness and beneficiary in two of his parishioners' wills: SROB IC 500/2/47/5; IC 500/2/47/191.

⁷⁰ PCC 66 Cope. Cosen's will was not proved until 1616. It is thus possible that this payment – to be distributed in yearly payments of 10s – supplemented Carter's income.

⁷¹ Norf.RO DN/VIS/4/2/3, fo.73^v. The testators in fifteen of the thirty-two Cavenham wills proved at Sudbury, Norwich and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury between 1580 and 1640 explicitly hoped to be saved through the merits and passion of Christ, 'and by none other'.

cold'. In a second epistle, dedicated to Lewkenor's siblings, Carter noted that some of his 'brethren' had advised him not to publish the sermon as it would make him 'lyable to many censures and imputations'.⁷² In the remainder of this section we will consider the ways in which this sermon opened itself up to 'censure' through its combination of praise and criticism. It will be suggested that this text both revealed and attempted to resolve some of the weaknesses in the position of the beneficed clergy with regard to their lay patrons. Finally, we will analyse how the text constructed the position of the clergyman with regard to the 'competing communities' of the godly and the parish.

III.ii. Eulogy and Admonition: The Politics of Dependence

There are two features of this text that seem unusual in the context of a parish lecture. The first of these is the choice of text. Whilst the exhortation to 'bee learned, O yee Judges of the earth' makes Psalms 2:10 a logical choice for an assize sermon, it appears somewhat out of place for an audience of 'private' men, potentially from a variety of social backgrounds. Carter dealt with this latent anomaly by focusing on the description and application of the qualities in the text, whilst only briefly considering the persons to whom the counsel is directed. The overriding theme of the first part of the sermon is therefore the need for spiritual wisdom and learning 'since ignorance is the mother of errour'. Carter favoured the Genevan translation 'be learned', he explained, since 'learning implieth . . . both *instruction*, and *reformation*; both *knowledge* and *practise*'. Having defined his terms, Carter advised the true Christian student to 'plie his private study . . . frequent learned exercises . . . be much in conference . . . be

⁷² Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, sigs.A3^r-A4^v (Epistles).

much in contemplation'. He then urged his audience in their capacity as church-patrons, ministers, or household patriarchs, to 'pitty the ignorance of others, and to labour to draw them out of their ignorance'. This is the cue for the beginning of his forceful admonitions against the abuses of church patronage and the neglect of pastoral and parental duties. Only on the forty-forth page do we finally reach the persons of kings and judges. From this part of his text Carter extrapolates the doctrine that 'those that are in inferiour places [judges] must labour for wisdom as well as those that are in superiour places [kings]'. The Psalm names only these two, he maintains, 'because [the common people] are for the most part led by the mighty'.⁷³

The second unusual feature appears in the latter half of the sermon, where Carter offered a eulogy to Lewkenor that would have been more at home in a funeral sermon than a parish lecture. Lewkenor's official funeral sermon, preached by Timothy Oldmayne, was not published until a year after Carter's *The wise king*. Both Carter and Oldmayne agreed that the nation had suffered a terrible loss with Lewkenor's demise, although there are few similarities in the detailed content of each of these sermons. It may be the case that Carter rushed his own sermon into print in an attempt to steal the march on a rival preacher who had deprived him of a golden opportunity for self-promotion at the funeral of a famous puritan gentleman.⁷⁴ Carter defended his decision to offer this portrait of godliness with reference to the fashions of the time: 'For mine owne part, I cannot think it needeles in these times, when men live by example, and not by rule, to propose a godly example before you for your imitation'.⁷⁵ As with any

⁷³ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.17, 21, 27-31, 44.

⁷⁴ Oldmayne, *Gods rebuke*. For a brief discussion of both Oldmayne's and Carter's 'funeral sermons' see Collinson, 'Magistracy and Ministry', pp.464-66.

⁷⁵ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, p.47.

godly epideictic rhetoric, *The wise king* displays its author's consciousness of the need to avoid accusations of flattery in 'honouring a righteous man in his death'. In some texts this is achieved by hedging praise of the subject with admissions of his imperfections. Alternatively, the preacher could submit the qualities of his subject to the judgement of the world or of his audience.⁷⁶

As we shall see, Carter did place some responsibility on his audience to confirm his praise of his patron, but overall his sermon is concerned less with constructing and defending Lewkenor's posthumous reputation than with using this to expose the deficiencies of those he has left behind. 'I have not spoken one word', Carter asserted, 'with an intent to flatter any person living, by commending him that is dead'.⁷⁷ Since his subject was himself a gentleman, it is the gentry who come in for the harshest criticism in their conduct as patrons, the governance of their households, and their neglect of charitable works. In his patronage Lewkenor 'would . . . not make shipwracke of a good conscience for a little lucre' but he had left behind him others who 'would make themselves merry with the Lords portion, and spend it upon dogs, hauks, and twenty to one of worse matters; and then colour over all their theevery by calling of their benefices by the name of *donatives*'. On his visits to Lewkenor's house, 'whether I have so often resorted', Carter had 'never heard one oath throughout the whole family', yet in the households of other gentlemen 'come but within their thresholds to heare the master sweare, and servants sweare (I quake and tremble to name their oaths, by the precious wounds of God, by Gods heart, by Christs

⁷⁶ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, p.46. In Oldmayne's *Gods rebuke*, Lewkenor's qualities are framed in the form of a bill submitted to 'the verdict of his Countrie', to which, he claimes, only '*Billa vera*, a virdict true in all points' could justifiably be admitted (pp.35-38). For the development of this form of epideictic rhetoric among English protestants see P. Collinson, 'A Magazine of Religious Patterns': An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism', in Collinson, *Godly People*, pp.499-525.

blood, &c.) a man would think himself entred into the very suburbs of hell'. Whilst Lewkenor was alive a 'great company of Orphans, widdowes, and fatherlesse children . . . weekly and dayly sought and found releife at his gates', whereas 'in these dayes . . . some like *Absolom* build Pyramides to keep their names from oblivion . . . for vaine ostentation, till they have utterly disabled themselves, for all workes of charity'.⁷⁸ Carter was clearly fond of shock tactics – most notably the quoting of blasphemous phrases – designed to shake his congregation out of complacency. His self-presentation as a 'contentious man' drew attention to the dangerous ground on which he was treading by singling out 'many of our gentry' as the worst practitioners of these sins.

Of course it is impossible to know how many of the county gentry would have been in the audience for Carter's sermon. We might guess that a parish lecture in a small village given by a minister who had only recently obtained his Masters degree was unlikely to have attracted the godly élite in the same numbers as the combination lecture at nearby Bury. By marketing the sermon as a paean to a pious individual, however, Carter and his publisher certainly increased the chances of attracting readers among the Suffolk gentry, who were likely to have been disposed to purchase funeral sermons given for those they knew.⁷⁹ Any shock waves caused by the sermon's criticism of the gentry, therefore, may well have been encountered after its publication, rather than at the oration itself.

But what of the broader meaning and impact of this text? In probing this sermon for its historical meanings it is important to look beyond the most

⁷⁷ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, p.68.

⁷⁸ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.57, 58, 62.

⁷⁹ For the apparent popularity of funeral sermons as mirrors of exemplary practice see Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp.35, 203-05.

inflammatory rhetoric of the text and consider how its strategies more generally operated to articulate and resolve the contradictions and weaknesses inherent in Carter's position. The most obvious of these was the dependence of Carter and his fellow ministers on the individual disposition of their lay patrons. Although the power of the lay over the clerical estate was a familiar subject of complaint for protestant ministers, there is reason to think that in a county like Suffolk, where the gentry's control was such a defining feature of local ecclesiastical politics, the image of the gentleman patron was particularly highly contested. Moreover, at the time of Carter's sermon it may well have been felt that certain 'incomers' to the protestant élite, most notably Sir Stephen Soame, could not be relied upon to place the worthiest ministers in their cures. Superficially Carter's solutions do not seem to differ from those of many other puritan clerics: if all men had a conscience as clear as Lewkenor then they would appoint 'such Pastors as would be carefull of the flocke committed to their charge' and would provide them with adequate maintenance. But on closer inspection it becomes clear that the text itself undermines the relationship of dependence and subordination upon which this ideal depends. When Carter spoke of Lewkenor he described him as a 'true and faithfull friend', whom he might 'commend . . . too much' simply because he 'loved too much'. Carter could not even mention Lewkenor's name without his 'heart bleed[ing] afresh'. This idiom of love and friendship served to supersede and therefore annihilate the bond of patron and client, meaning that Carter could effectively conceal the reality of his pitiful lack of independence. In the narrative context, therefore, the relationship between Carter and Lewkenor no longer acted as a model for lay-clerical relations but

merely served as a sentimentalised depiction of an affective bond between two individuals.⁸⁰

The auditor or reader is thus forced to look elsewhere in the sermon for a model of more general applicability. The most obvious place that offers itself is Carter's treatment of the general duties of patrons. He began this section with the following rhetorical question: 'If Magistrates in corporation-townes, where free schooles are erected, shall choose unskilfull and negligent Teachers, must not the schollers bee unlearned?' This is then followed by a characteristic piece of self-avowedly contentious preaching:

I must not feare the faces of men, and I will be bold to tell many gentlemen that they are the cause why whole parishes generally are so ignorant. For why? many gentlemen are growne to that passion, that they will doe any thing for lucre: I doe not accuse all, nay, I can acquit many out of mine own knowledge: but there are a great many also that . . . present they care not whom to their benefice. I could willingly spend more time in reproofe of such a mercilesse generation, that care not whose soule fried in hell, so they may have two or three yeares profit before hand, or a yeerely reservation to themselves of the tithes and tenths.⁸¹

Despite the caveat 'I do not accuse all', there can be no doubt in this passage that it is individualised *gentry* patronage and not lay patronage *per se* that is the perceived cause of widespread malaise. The analogy with the appointment of schoolmasters by 'Magistrates in corporation-townes' suggests the solution:

⁸⁰ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.50, 62, 68.

⁸¹ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.27-28.

corporate control over ecclesiastical livings. Given the proximity of Cavenham to the recently incorporated town of Bury, it is quite possible that local people who read and heard this sermon saw in this analogy an implicit celebration of the town's gradual emancipation from the stranglehold of the local puritan gentry.

This is particularly significant coming from the lips (or pen) of a Suffolk clergyman. Whilst appearing to promote the model of magistrate and minister that has so defined our understanding of religion in this county, Carter effectively exposed the bankruptcy of this partnership. This is not to suggest that he was some kind of prophet for a new age, an inspiration for the activities of the feoffees for impropriations.⁸² The evidence of his later patronage confirms that he, like many ministers, continued to work within a traditional framework of appointment.⁸³ His sermon nevertheless displays a recognition of the limitations of a discourse and practise that prioritised the volition and conscience of a powerful individual, aided by imperfect human laws. It was the exposure of these fault lines, together with the failure of king, convocation or parliament to find a means of their redress, which helped legitimise the actions of those lawyers, merchants and clergymen who supported the corporate organisation of the feoffees.⁸⁴

⁸² Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.253: the first record of the activities of the feoffees is found in 1625-26 (although Attorney-General Noy dated the existence of the society from 1612-13).

⁸³ As well as securing the patronage of Sir Thomas Jermyn, Carter also dedicated *Christ his last will* to the Buckinghamshire puritan gentlewoman Lady Anne Borlase of Little Marlow, and to her son Sir William.

⁸⁴ The favouring of corporate over individual patronage is found in other treatments of this subject. In his *Anatomy of melancholy* (1621) Robert Burton stressed that impropriations and patronage should be in the hands of 'common societies, corporations, etc.' (cited in Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.135).

III.iii. Competing Communities

Although we cannot know the exact composition of the congregation at this lecture it is possible to discuss Carter's own construction of this audience within the text itself. Because this was a weekday lecture we would expect those who attended to be among the more committed protestants, keen to participate in the voluntary activities of the godly. Where Carter described the necessary duties of the true student of God, he appeared to be addressing just such a community, prescribing a diet of private study and contemplation combined with forms of sociability – including attendance at 'the assemblies of the Saints' and 'conference with those which are learned' – that would cement the affective bonds between them. This sociability, he insisted, should unite men across social boundaries. At the lowest level, this community should encompass the 'poore Saints', since 'a man shall sometimes learne from the weakest, that which he could never learne by conversing with the most wise and literate'. At the other extreme, his audience could see themselves as brethren in Christ with as eminent a personage as Sir Edward Lewkenor, who 'to the comfort of my soule and joy of many Christians frequented these assemblies'.⁸⁵

Although parochial lectures were theoretically open to those outside the parish, it may well be that the congregation at Carter's lecture was composed almost entirely of a group of his own parishioners. He certainly implied as much in the following passage on the necessity of prayer:

And now, brethren, I would I could speak something to moove you in these un-praying times: I have called upon you from Sabbath to

⁸⁵ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.25, 46.

Sabbath, and Sermon after Sermon have I prooved both the necessitie,
power and efficacie of praier, and for ought I heare all is *water spilt
upon the ground*.

At another point he referred to himself as ‘pastor of this congregation’.⁸⁶ On one level this rhetoric demonstrates a ‘typically’ puritan narrowing of the definition of ‘congregation’, to encompass only those parishioners who showed visible signs of their elect status. On the other hand, by drawing attention to the common parochial identity shared by his particular audience of ‘brethren’, Carter created the space to address his audience not only as saints in Christ but also as tenants under a single manorial lord. This dual identity is confirmed in the depiction of Lewkenor both as a member of godly assemblies and as ‘Lord of this towne’. If we are looking for a specific place in the text where the audience’s identity as tenants seems to make itself felt, it is perhaps in Carter’s description of Lewkenor’s charity. ‘Your selves can beare me record’, he declared, ‘how many of your poor people he cloathed with the fleeces of his sheepe, and what his custome was, (*viz.*) for every yeare of his life, to cloath one of your poore naked ones.’⁸⁷ The possessive ‘your poor people’ might in one sense have been applied to the Christian community. But in the light of the seigneurial monopoly on foldcourse rights discussed above, it certainly had a resonance within the parish itself. Carter’s affirmation of the collective benefit of Lewkenor’s sheep effectively elided the diverse meanings this image had for different inhabitants of Cavenham. Some of the wealthier yeomen – and the minister himself – benefited directly from the presence of a large flock in the parish, whilst the farming

⁸⁶ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.55-56.

⁸⁷ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, pp.46, 61.

interests of smaller husbandmen could be severely threatened if the foldcourse rights were insisted upon. In this way, Carter not only reconfigured his audience as parishioners and tenants but also carved for himself an alternative and unexpected role: not that of ‘contentious man’ but rather that of peacemaker.

What is at first sight a straightforward piece of epideictic rhetoric and a model for others to follow, therefore, has turned out on closer analysis to be full of forthright criticism and intriguing tensions. The eulogistic rhetoric acted as the basis for a critique of gentry self-interest, the full impact of which may only have been realised once the sermon went into print. It was also a means of negotiating the contradictions and weaknesses in Carter’s own position as a godly beneficed minister. In coming to terms with the reality of clerical dependence and suggesting – albeit implicitly – an alternative to this, Carter’s text is also part of a broader questioning of the amount of control exercised by powerful lay patrons over the affairs of the church.

One final aspect of *The wise king* is worth noting, as it sets the scene for the analysis of Carter’s second text. An underlying theme throughout this sermon is encapsulated in Carter’s definition of learning as ‘both *knowledge* and *practise*’. In this connection he reprimanded

our hollow-hearted professors, which know Gods will, yea and carie before them the lampe of profession, and yet lead their lives after such a manner, that if the devil himselfe were in a bodily shape, he could live no worser; usurers, extortioners, cheaters, raylers, &c. would to God, I say, they would consider it, that their knowledge and gifts shall but helpe them on the more roundly to hell fire, without obedience.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Carter, *The wise king and the learned judge*, p.34.

This particularly vicious denunciation of hypocrisy was to take on an even sharper edge in Carter's third published sermon, when 'practice' was defined especially in terms of charity and mercy towards the poor and when the identity of 'hollow-hearted' or 'formall' professors was indicated more directly. It is to this sermon that we now turn.

IV CHARITY, CONTENTION AND REPUTATION: THE PREACHING OF *CHRIST HIS LAST WILL*

Christ his last will and John his legacy was, according to Carter, one of a series of parochial sermons on the Passion, which he had come to preach by chance at Clare when he 'rode through the towne' on market day and found the lecture 'at that time disappointed of a supply'.⁸⁹ As luck would have it, Carter had only recently prepared this material, so his 'meditations' on the verses were fresh in his mind. This presents us with two considerable problems of interpretation. Firstly, if Carter delivered this sermon *ex tempore*, as he claims, how far does the printed text represent the oral event? Secondly, how far is it possible to read this sermon as deriving part of its meaning at least from its specific setting and audience? On the first point, there is no doubt that this text was augmented and revised for publication. In his preface to the reader Carter admitted to adding 'somewhat to the sixe and twentyeth verse [the first part of the sermon], that I thought to have urged but could not for want of time'. On the other hand, he claimed to have written out the sermon, 'I will not say verbatim, forasmuch as my manner is not to write out all I speake, and when I have it perfectly by heart

⁸⁹ Carter, *Christ his last will*, sig.A3' (Epistle). The minister, Isaac Joyner, had been a contemporary of Carter's at Cambridge (*Alumni Cantab*, II, p.491).

to repeate it *syllabice* according as I wrote it, but as neere as I could remember . . . the same words as that I preached'. We may thus suggest that whilst the printed text may omit some important asides relating to some points and may elaborate further on other doctrines, the central arguments, sources and examples deployed were those heard by the original congregation at Clare.⁹⁰

Regarding the second interpretative problem, it is by no means clear that we should believe Carter's version of how he came to preach at Clare. Up until 1619 the lecture had been monopolised by Samuel Fairclough, who proved so popular that the inhabitants petitioned him to become a permanent lecturer there. It is likely that Carter knew of Fairclough's refusal of this offer and departure to King's Lynn in this year, and took advantage of his absence – at some point between 1619 and his sermon's publication in 1621 – to gain his own spot before a more prestigious audience.⁹¹ It is hard to imagine that this sermon could have been delivered without notes, and there would be little reason for Carter to carry these to market unless he intended to preach there. Furthermore, the published text of this sermon wears its learning on its sleeve to a greater extent than either of his previous works, suggesting it may have been intended for an audience including gentlemen and wealthy townsmen.⁹² At the very least, we can be

⁹⁰ Carter, *Christ his last will*, sig.A3^v ('To the Reader'). In the course of the text Carter refers to the expected length of the lecture – one hour (p.6). The published sermon consists of eighty-six quarto pages, making it significantly longer than the original version if Carter did indeed stick to this time limit.

⁹¹ Fairclough had left the parish of Harleston and had presumably begun two years of study and lecturing in 1617, when the living became vacant (cf. DN/REG/16 Bk.22, fo.55^v). He was offered £100 to become lecturer at Kings Lynn and 'not above a *quarter* so much' to become lecturer of Clare. He went to Lynn but returned to Clare some time before 1623, after some trouble with various interest groups in the town (Clarke, *The lives of sundry eminent persons*, pp.160-61).

⁹² In contrast especially to Carter's first published sermons (*Gods omnipotencie*), there are a range of citations from Patristic and protestant theologians, Classical writers and even from 'Romanist' commentaries on Christ's passion. The sermon is also generously laced with Latin and Greek quotations.

reasonably certain that Carter, like any conscientious preacher, adapted his text to the audience and occasion.

Whatever the immediate circumstances that brought Carter to Clare's pulpit, the sermon he preached caused a good deal of disquiet:

the Sermon finished, it is admirable to consider how many mouthes were opened against me, some said I was mis-informed against the place, other sayd that I was an hatefull enemy to such as are called professors, all concluded that I was a man of a turbulent spirit.

Carter suddenly found his own reputation in peril: reports of his alleged words 'passed with swiftnesse from man to man', and whilst some offered him comfort at this 'defamation', others were to be found 'trumpeting foorth what they heard, in the extreamest manner'.⁹³ Although this somewhat hyperbolic insistence that the sermon caused such a stir may well have been a marketing strategy designed to boost sales among browsing readers, there is no reason to think that this account of the reaction the sermon caused is without foundation. In part this final section will be concerned with teasing out the reasons for this reaction. It will begin, however, by considering how Carter used an emotive scriptural passage to fashion himself as the 'poor man's advocate' and how this role can be seen to have embraced both broader contradictions and limitations in the discourse of welfare and the anxieties produced by his own pastoral style.

IV.i. The 'Poore Mans Cause'

Throughout *Christ his last will*, Carter employed a number of strategies to construct himself as an 'advocate' for the poor man's cause, in contrast to the

⁹³ Carter, *Christ his last will*, sig.A3^r ('To the Reader').

harsh or indifferent attitudes of his fellow preachers and laymen. He chastised 'our lukewarme *Laodeceans*, that happily will plead the poore mans cause, but how? They care not whether they speake or hold their peace, whether they win or lose the day, after a dead and dull, and frozen, and cold manner, without all spirit and zeale'. By contrast, Carter pronounced his own desire to follow the example of Christ and 'deale earnestly, not carelessly and coldly in the behalfe of the distressed'.⁹⁴ He initially focused on the duties of children towards their ageing parents but he also exploited the close conceptual link in Calvinist thought between familial and spiritual kin or 'brethren' to apply the moral message of his scriptural text to the godly community more generally. This is apparent, for example, in his discussion of the abandonment of the poor by their richer brethren. Here he quoted from Proverbs 19:7 – 'if a man bee poore, his own brethren will hate him; how much more will his friends goe farre from him; they will pursue him with their wordes, but they will not helpe him'. There is no indication in the text that this is anything other than a straightforward quotation from Scripture. In actual fact, Carter has reversed the order of object and subject in the second part of the text, which should read '*he* [i.e. the poor man] pursueth *them* with his words, yet they are wanting to him'. This creative appropriation of the text thus replaces the image of the clamorous pauper with that of a campaign of criticism against the poor.⁹⁵ Even the defence of private property was presented as a defence of the poor: 'if wee deny propriety of goods', Carter proclaimed, 'it will follow that *Naboth* was too scrupulous in the matter of his vineyard'. The sermon is also saturated in emotive imagery, including the

⁹⁴ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.45-46. Cf. Revelations 3:14-16.

⁹⁵ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.18-19.

description of the 'horrible oppression' of those 'that flay off the skins; and eate the flesh of Gods people like bread'.⁹⁶

In the elaboration of his central theme, Carter allowed his advocacy of the poor man's cause to become inflected with the voice of experience. 'The teares that I have seene trickling downe the cheekes of aged parents and the neglect which I have seene amongst ungratefull children', he claimed, 'doe even force mee, and compell me to speake'. The evidence of the Cavenham wills suggests that we should not be too quick to dismiss this eyewitness claim as pure prophetic hyperbole. In the region more generally, moreover, the high concentration of industry encouraged the movement of kin within a limited area and therefore perhaps heightened expectations of household care.⁹⁷ Experience could also be made to tell in other ways. The establishment in the genre of complaint of a close correspondence between the minister and the poor allowed Carter to move from the position of compassionate observer to that of victim. He thus protested that in his time 'a paynfull and laborious Minister' would struggle to find a disciple like John, 'to whom hee may with confidence upon his death bed, commit the care of his father, mother, wife, or children'. A minister could toil in a parish for forty years or more and still his poor widow and children might be forced into vagrancy, 'such is the ingratitude, & unmercifulnes of these unthankfull times'. Where those engaged in Suffolk's cloth industry were able to draw upon the networks of kin that were fostered by economic ties, the families of poorer clergy were in a potentially more isolated position. They may well have been considered deserving recipients of charity but the willingness of

⁹⁶ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.59, 86. Carter used John's evident ability to care for Mary as further proof of the protestant orthodoxy that the disciples were not without possessions (pp.81-86).

⁹⁷ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.37-41; Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, p.245.

parishioners and parish officers to dispense both formal and informal relief would very likely have been influenced by their attitude towards their late pastor.⁹⁸ On one level, then, Carter's complaint can be read as an expression of godly anxiety about the potential consequences of what we would regard as pastoral 'failure': an inability to win over the hearts and minds of the majority of his parishioners and perhaps the alienation of at least parts of his flock through an unpopular preaching style. If Lewkenor's death in 1618 did indeed threaten Carter's financial maintenance then this can only have added to his concern. In a manner typical of defensive puritan narratives of pastoral experience, this anxiety is dressed in the apparel of complaint against the churlishness of his parishioners.

These narratives of domestic and pastoral failure both depended on a stylised polarity between the figures of parent and child, which of course did violence to social realities. In one sense, therefore, Carter's criticism of filial neglect can be read as a symptom of the 'fundamental and damaging lack of fit between puritan perceptions of poverty and the facts'.⁹⁹ There can be no acknowledgement in his text that the children of elderly paupers were themselves likely to be struggling on the edge of subsistence. Instead, these children are seen as the perpetrators of the worst kind of cruelty. Hence Carter's claim that his doctrine taxed 'such children as are so far from relieving their parents, that they rise up in open hostility against them, oppresse them, contend with them, and are ready to take occasion by the slenderest hayre to pull them out of house and

⁹⁸ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.46–48. For a voluntary subscription 'for the relief of the poor widows & orphans of the county clergy' in the neighbourhood of Ipswich at the beginning of the eighteenth century see BL Add. MS 19171, fo.180^r. Cf. also the comments of the Lincolnshire cleric William Storre's parishioners after his sudden murder: 'it is a thing most grievous to us, aswel in regard of his wife and five smal children, whose staffe of bread (as himself sayd) by this meanes is broken' (*Three Bloodie Murders*, sig.B2^v: 'The Testimonie of his Parishioners').

⁹⁹ Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p.153.

home'.¹⁰⁰ Rather than merely making the preacher appear out of touch with reality, however, this imagery also acted as an inadvertent critique of the 'relief system created by the poor laws [that] was structured not on the principle of parochial provision but on that of kinship care'. Carter's rhetoric is therefore as much part of the process whereby contemporaries recognised the limitations of kin provision as was magisterial reluctance to force children to relieve their parents in line with legislative demands.¹⁰¹

At times, Carter's text appears explicitly to recognise the weaknesses in its own exhortatory idiom. We see this principally in his admission that compulsory parochial relief was becoming a necessary fact of life. Whilst the succouring of the poor was the duty of 'every particular man & woman', the neglect of this duty was so widespread that if there were 'not an over seer or two in every towne appointed for that end' then the poor 'might be cast away for want of sustenance'.¹⁰² The text also struggles to contain the contradictions in its depiction of social relations. On the one hand, the conditions of rich and poor are starkly contrasted and continued poverty is figured as the result of derision and oppression. On the other hand, the text is underpinned by a recognition of the essential mutability of wealth. This is registered most clearly in Carter's ventriloquisation of the complaint of 'seditious persons' who 'cry out against our glorious peace, and . . . are ready to say, that times of warre are better then times of peace'. He also condemned those who 'repine and murmur' at 'our great

¹⁰⁰ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.44. For the suggestion that in undertaking to provide for their parents children in fact became the 'superiors' and their parents 'inferiors' see Matthieu Virel, *A learned and excellent treatise, containing all the principall groundes of Christian religion*, trans. Stephen Egerton (1603), p.130.

¹⁰¹ Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.49-50. As Hindle points out, the 1601 act placed a clear obligation on children to maintain their own parents (43 Eliz. c.2 sect.vii).

¹⁰² Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.31-32.

plenty'. Although Carter did not endorse these complaints, he nevertheless articulated the widespread sense of insecurity felt among both clothiers and their employees in this region, even in a time of relatively good harvests. In fact he echoed the cry of those involved in the industry across the nation in the early 1620s: 'When was it seen a land so distressed without war?'¹⁰³ It is interesting also that men of unspecified social status are seen to 'repine' and 'murmur' against the abstract entity of 'plenty'. In other contexts these forms of speech are associated specifically with the complaints of the poor against the prosperity of their superiors.¹⁰⁴ Whilst Carter's overall discussion is therefore constrained by an ideological and rhetorical system that operated through a series of dichotomies and opposites, it nevertheless begins to comprehend the complex reality of a region in which the categories and interests of 'rich' and 'poor' could not be neatly polarised.

IV.ii. The Reputation and Communion of the Godly

Despite this ability to reveal the limitations of its own discursive framework, the sermon is nevertheless explicitly concerned with traditional exhortations to charity. It 'is the duty of all Gods people', Carter declared, 'to succor & relieve the miseries of the afflicted'. To do this not only 'honoureth God' but also 'honoureth our religion and profession' and acted as a 'sure signe and syntome of true religion'.¹⁰⁵ These considerations, rather than any hope of personal reward, should be the principal factors in moving men to give alms. Carter emphasised this point through his selective quotation of Scripture. For example, his

¹⁰³ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.51; BL Add. MS 34324, fo.179r.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Henry Arthington, *Provision for the poore, now in penurie* (1597), p.11.

paraphrase of Luke 16:9 – ‘Christ also charges us to make our selves friends with unrighteous Mammon, and to give to the poore’ – omitted the end of this passage: ‘that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation’.¹⁰⁶ Despite this concern with the collective reputation of the godly, there is nothing in this sermon in praise of the ‘renowned and glorious workes’ of public distinction – the endowment of schools, almshouses etc. – which are cited in other protestant persuasions to charity.¹⁰⁷ The ultimate aim was to secure the ‘communion of the saints’ and not the praise of the world. Carter was forthright in his condemnation of ‘our Pharises, that never doe good worke but it is in publike, & in open view, as if God would beleewe nothing without witnesse’. He even went so far as to compare such men to profane ‘players’ gathering spectators together for their latest pageant.¹⁰⁸

Carter was of course far from the only preacher to offer a model of communal solidarity based on bonds of spiritual affinity. It can nevertheless be argued that its deployment in this particular context was in part a means of confronting the spectre of an alternative form of collective solidarity. A possible subtext to Carter’s admonitions is a warning to the clothiers of Suffolk that unless they transformed an exploitative relationship with their poor employees into one of paternalistic concern, they risked strengthening the bonds of occupational unity among the clothworkers. Paradoxically, the relative abundance of harvests when Carter preached this sermon may have created a more dangerous situation for those clothiers who found themselves in financial

¹⁰⁵ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.56-57, 60.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.55. Cf. John Gore, *The poore mans hope. A sermon preached by John Gore, rector of Wenden-lofts in Essex, 1635 (1646)*, p.11, where the full passage is cited.

¹⁰⁷ Cooper, *The art of giving*, p.88; Downname, *The plea of the poore*, sigs.A2^r-A3^v (Epistle).

¹⁰⁸ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.52, 86.

difficulty, since it was far less likely in these circumstances that the anger of their employees would be directed at the marketers of corn.

As well as speaking to the economic realities of the region, Carter's discourse registers his place among the second generation of godly clergy in Suffolk. This is most apparent in the following depiction of hypocrisy:

Let such as give Gods Ministers the hearing, consider this, that come to Church as others doe, and lift up their Eyes and Hands, and say *Amen* to every petition, & as soone as they are out of the Church runne headlong in the high way to hell, or if they obey in some matters, as the externall observation of the Sabbath, prayer in their familyes, &c. there is all. Call upon them to give almes . . . and then [they plead] . . . *the Lord be mercifull unto mee.*¹⁰⁹

This imagery has strong echoes of Richard Bancroft's satire some forty years earlier.¹¹⁰ At the time of Bancroft's intervention in Suffolk, the godly élite had strengthened its solidarity against a common episcopal enemy, but this tight-knit commonwealth had now begun to produce its own Nathans, who were prepared to criticise the sins of some of its most powerful Davids. A striking aspect of Carter's criticism is his insistence that observance of the sabbath is no sufficient mark of obedience and election. This is Carter's wake-up call to Suffolk's godly commonwealth: sabbatarianism is no longer the principal source of unity and means of identifying the godly that once it was. The godly élite would not get away with combining impressive shows of piety with the aggressive pursuit of their own material interests. The decisive aspect of obedience in Carter's sermon

¹⁰⁹ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.73.

¹¹⁰ See above, pp.185-86.

is the ability to follow the example of true religion that placed charity and forgiveness at its centre. Experience showed this to be true: 'I have heard many professors rayled upon, but few charitable professors'. 'What is it', Carter ventured to ask, 'that makes professors . . . and profession evill spoken of, but the dissolute and scandalous lives of our professors, because they are gripers, grinders of the poore, extortioners, usurers, merciles'.¹¹¹

IV.iii. Sermon as Satire

This bold criticism is reinforced later in the sermon with the passage against 'some of our greatest professors', cited in the introduction to this chapter. Carter's declaration that he would not be like the 'lukewarme laodeceans' paved the way for this attack on 'hypocriticall white skinned professors, that make a shew of godlynesse and deny the power of it'.¹¹² The forcefulness of this critique may have been enough in itself to provoke the disgruntled reaction from some of his hearers. Those clothiers in Clare who were involved in the production of the new draperies may have been particularly concerned to protect their reputation for providing their workers with equitable pay. I want to suggest, however, that Carter also made certain choices in his exposition, which worked with his physical surroundings to point the finger of suspicion at Sir Thomas Barnardiston and his family and to a lesser extent at Sir Stephen Soame.

The interior of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Clare advertised the public works of some of the county's leading godly gentry. The coat armoury of Barnardiston and Soame were among those displayed in the chancel window.

¹¹¹ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.56.

¹¹² Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.71.

Each is described here as ‘a good benefactor to this Church’, following their contribution to the repair of the chancel in 1617. Suspicions that this benevolent act may have been intended more for the benefit of individual reputations than for the benefit of the parishioners as a whole are raised when we realise that by 1619 the Church still remained in a state of some disrepair. In this year the crown issued a charitable brief to numerous counties which noted that ‘the poore Inhabitants . . . have very willingly contributed to the uttermost of their abilities’ towards the building of Clare’s chancel, but were nevertheless in debt to the tune of £250 ‘more than they have received’ for work already performed.¹¹³ Given that this was Thomas Barnardiston’s parish church, in which his children had been baptised and married, the parishioners of Clare might have felt aggrieved that he had not devoted more of his considerable wealth to this project. Carter’s disparaging comments on those who ‘never doe good worke but it is in publike’ may have been accompanied in the sermon as preached by words or gestures that exploited the symbolism in the church itself. The audience’s attention may have been drawn to the immortalised reputation of these local gentlemen as ‘good benefactors’ – reinforced in Soame’s case by his numerous extravagant works elsewhere. These symbols may then have been weighed against Soame’s aggressive pursuit of his own interests in mercantile trade and his purchasing and reorganisation of manorial lands, or, in Barnardiston’s case, the attempted sale of local common resources.

Although Barnardiston is likely to have been dead by the time the lecture was delivered, there are two passages that suggest an attempt by Carter to

¹¹³ BL Add. MS 19102, fos.85^r, 88^v; *Brief for one-year collections to repair the church in Clare, Suffolk* (1619).

allude to his less than exemplary reputation and thereby challenge the family's claims to godliness. In a section urging 'constant obedience' he claimed that the charge of inconstancy could be levelled at 'many in our times' who 'at the first profession of religion . . . were exceeding forward for the advancing of Gods worship, ready to distribute, &c. But now are as cold as frost or Ice in winter'. Some even 'goe backward, turne mocke-Gods, opposers of the Gospell, and what not'. The plea that follows this attack – 'Pardon now my boldnesse' – perhaps indicates Carter's awareness that there was a good chance of the audience recognising Barnardiston's backsliding in this reference.¹¹⁴ A second discussion that may have seemed to apply to the family proposes the example of covetousness in one who 'is to marry a wife, and if shee have but *Achsah* her portion, fruitfull lands, or that *Peter* wanted, gold or silver, let her be what she will bee, as blinde as *Bartimaeus*, as lame as *Mephibosheth*, as stubborne as *Vashti*, as lame as light as *Oinah*, it matters not'. The reference to blindness may have pointed to Sir Thomas' wife Dame Anne. This criticism may also have rung in the ears of Nathaniel Barnardiston, who had not only pocketed a large dowry on his marriage to Jane Soame but had also apparently defaulted on an indenture by which he was to grant his wife a jointure of £500 a year.¹¹⁵ Although Nathaniel was only on the cusp of his influence in the county, he was already beginning to cement his godly reputation, not least by his regular attendance at the Clare lecture.

¹¹⁴ Carter, *Christ his last will*, pp.80-81.

¹¹⁵ Carter, *Christ his last will*, p.67; SROB FL 639/11/1, p.8.

It is hoped that the foregoing discussion has revealed something of the rich interpretative possibilities offered in these two sermons. The theme we have returned to over and over again has been the construction, questioning and defence of reputation – of the gentry; of the godly community; of an individual patron and of Carter himself – and how this fits into our understanding of the dynamics of Suffolk's godly commonwealth. Carter did not go as far as Samuel Ward, whose assize sermon we considered in the previous chapter, in questioning the integrated system of social and political power that sustained gentry supremacy within this godly community. In *The wise king*, however, he nevertheless implicitly endorsed a 'corporate' alternative to this dominance of powerful individuals. Whereas Ward made a relatively straightforward distinction between the godly and the profane on the county bench, moreover, in *Christ his last will* Carter explicitly targeted those who were considered to be among the county's 'greatest professors'. Both of these texts therefore allow us to explore further the tensions between magistrate and minister and how these were given the space to develop within the relative security of the 'Jacobean consensus'. In the absence of the political platform of presbyterianism, only the 'social miracle' of charity and love could unite the truly godly community.

In this respect, as Patrick Collinson has suggested, the Bezaleel Carter of *Christ his last will* has much in common with the Thomas Carew of the *Caveat for clothiers*.¹¹⁶ Carter's preaching has none of the detailed econometric

¹¹⁶ Collinson, 'Christian Socialism', pp.170-71. Collinson applies John Bossy's description of 'the social miracle' to godly ideals of charitableness and fellow-feeling between men of varied social status (cf. J. Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), ch.4). For Carew's sermon see above, ch.1, p.103.

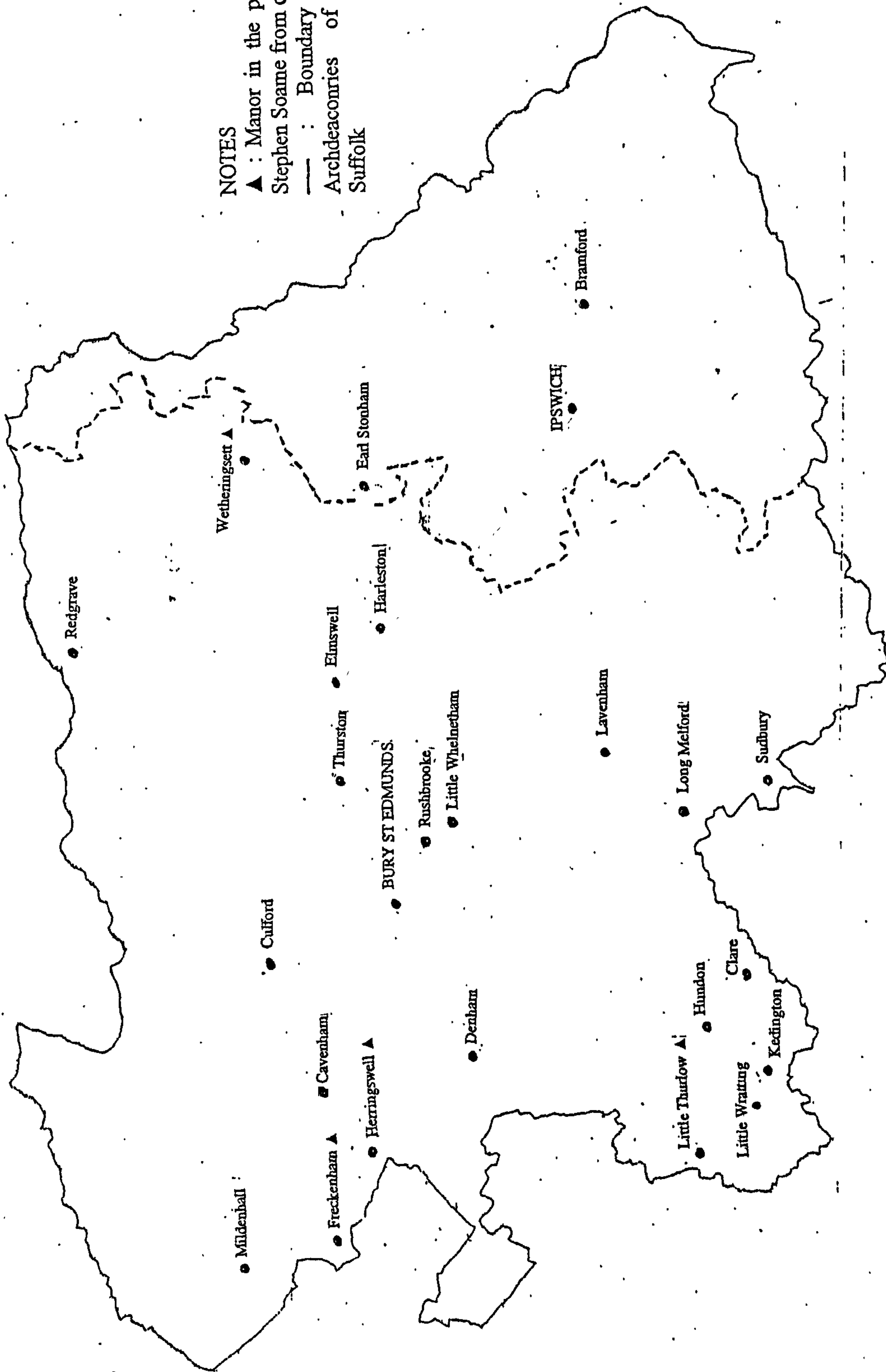
analysis that makes Carew's *Caveat* so extraordinary. Nevertheless, *Christ his last will* has a potentially broader range of targets than Carew's text and allows us to consider, in particular, the impact the behaviour of influential landowners had on their public regard. When combined with the treatment of the magistracy-ministry relationship in *The wise king*, Carter's writings can be shown to offer an equally fascinating picture of the shortcomings of a godly élite as that found in Carew.

We have perhaps gained something, furthermore, from having to look for the more subtle ways in which the patterns of social relations dictated by the dominance of the cloth industry made themselves felt in this text. It is partly through this that we come to understand how a sermon about the duties of children to their parents could become one about the communion of the saints. It has been argued here that Carter's two major published sermons grew out of a variety of economic, political and religious contexts, sometimes addressing these explicitly, but at other times seeming almost unconsciously to register their complexity.

A final important aim in the foregoing analysis has been to consider these sermons as a medium for the negotiation of tensions and anxieties within the author's own experience and relationships. This made it impossible, I have suggested, to sustain a single, straightforward authorial identity throughout the texts. In *Christ his last will*, Carter presents himself as both an impassioned observer and a potential victim of charity grown cold. In *The wise king*, his relationship to Lewkenor shifts from dependent client to affectionate friend. His position regarding his congregation here also appears to transmute from a guide

to the godly to a peacemaker between parishioners. The primary means by which Carter defined himself, however, was in his relationship to his patron. His ostensible treatment at Lewkenor's hands reflected positively on his own abilities as a preacher and teacher of the Word. A quite different relationship between magistrate and minister is apparent in our next case study. The tensions over resources and status that developed here are one of several contexts of conflict through which we approach the central text in the following chapter.

Map 1: Suffolk, showing places mentioned in the text



NOTES

- ▲ : Manor in the possession of Sir Stephen Soame from c.1600
- : Boundary between the Archdeaconries of Sudbury and Suffolk

CHAPTER FOUR

'Common-wealth' or 'Common woe'? Thomas Foster and the Politics of Complaint in Seventeenth-Century Devon

For the second of our three case studies we move from the east to the west of the country. The principal character here is Thomas Foster (1591-1647), rector of Farway in Devon.¹ Like Carter, he was the son of a clergyman and, after attending University, he permanently returned to the county of his birth. Foster was born in Bradninch, a borough and market town nine miles north-east of Exeter, where his father John was curate.² He matriculated at Oriel College, Oxford, aged 18, going on to graduate MA from Lincoln College in 1614. Although he was ordained at Exeter in the same year, it was not until June 1619 that he was appointed to his first living, as vicar of nearby Uffculme. Just over a year later he was promoted to the rectory of Farway by his father's patron, John Willoughby. This remained his sole benefice until his sequestration by parliamentary committee in 1643, after which he and his wife lodged with a parishioner for another four years until his death. According to John Walker in his *Sufferings of the Clergy*, Foster was 'a Man of sound learning, and unblameable Conversation'.³

Walker's bland but benign portrait stands in marked contrast to alleged contemporary complaints against Foster. The most powerful of his parishioners

¹ For the location of Farway and other places mentioned in this chapter, see Map 2, p.282.

² DRO 2975A/PR1; WCSL 'Farway Parish File'. From 1592 John Foster was also vicar of nearby Payhembury, where he probably resided until his death in 1627.

³ *Alumni Oxon*, II, p.521; DRO Chanter 50, 21; WSRO D5/1/2; DRO 67A/PR2; Walker, *Sufferings*, p.241.

in Farway had apparently labelled him a ‘factious . . . and contentious person’, whilst his sermon at the Exeter assizes had led to him being accused of issuing ‘personall *Invective*’ from the pulpit.⁴ This sermon, *Plouto-mastix: the scourge of covetousnesse: or, An apologie for the publike good, against privacie*, was Foster’s only published work and will be the focus of the following chapter. It was preached in Exeter Cathedral on 18 July 1630 ‘at the Command’ of Bishop Joseph Hall. Among its ‘greate audience’ were the two assize judges, Sir John Denham and Sir Thomas Richardson; the bishop; and at least six members of the Cathedral chapter. We are able to reconstruct part of the audience in this way because the day after speaking in the pulpit Foster found himself standing before the bishop, charged with having ‘scandalized’ the reputation of the Cathedral canons. Hall objected to Foster’s application of a critique of clerical negligence directly to ‘some of you Cathedrall men’. Foster was also accused of ‘tax[ing] the Cannons of the saide Church in these or the like words, that the Cannons [i.e. the canons of the Cathedral] made not noyse, But it was the muskateers [i.e. parish preachers] that made reporte’. This example of particular preaching left Hall with little choice but to punish Foster with a short suspension from his pastoral duties. When he published the sermon a year later, Foster claimed it was to correct the ‘*Misprision*’ of his hearers, whose guilty consciences had turned mere admonition into defamation – ‘the Pulpit’ into ‘a Pasquil’ [lampoon]. Upon ‘ingeneous perusall’ the reader would find that ‘neither the *Person*, nor the *Place*, but the too-well knowne *Offence (Negligence)* of some persons in those *Places*, is inveighed against’.⁵ This defence was only made possible, however, by

⁴ PRO STAC 8/146/12: ‘Foster vs. Predeaux and Sherringe’; Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, sig.A2^v (Epistle).

⁵ DRO Chanter 57, fo.11^v; Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, sig.A2^v (Epistle).

Foster's excision from the published text of the passages of application that had so scandalised the canons in the first place.

Whilst this critique of prebendial clergy and its transition into print forms an important part of the following analysis, it is not the only source of interest in this text. As the title suggests, this sermon alludes to numerous manifestations of 'privacie', or covetousness, including engrossing, regrating and usury. In his epistle, dedicated to Justices Denham and Richardson, Foster emphasised the economic context of widespread dearth at the time of both preaching and publication, noting that his chosen theme was 'as necessary for those Times, as the Times are Subject to Necessity'.⁶ The expository text is Phillipians 2:4 – 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of other men' – and the sermon is divided into the 'two naturall parts' suggested by this text: a dissuasion from 'Covetousnesse and Privacy' and an exhortation to 'publike Community'. The first part comprises a particularly excoriating critique of self-love and ambition amongst the rich, drawing on some of the most contentious 'commonwealth' rhetoric. Unchecked avarice was so advanced that 'we can hardly say we have a Common-wealth, it is a *Common-woe*; well defined by Sir THOMAS MOORE, long agoe – *Quaedam conspiratio divitum de suis negotiis, as Commodis, Reipublica nomine, tituloq tractantium*'. This 'conspiracy of the rich' could only be brought to an end if the people were 'Combined by the Spirit of Charity'. The models for this were the primitive church and the Aristotelian 'community of use', which demanded a '*Right of Charity*' as well as a '*Right of Propriety*'. Foster also urged his congregation to

⁶ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, sig.A3^v (Epistle).

follow the example of the United Provinces in their liberal yet discreet almsgiving.⁷

Even from this brief summary it is clear that *The scourge of covetousnesse* belongs to the broader elaboration of the genre of ‘complaint’ discussed in the first and second chapters of this thesis. Foster’s text, however, is particularly sensitive to the inequalities of power between its author and his audience, and to the ability of the pulpit to invert these inequalities. ‘No better place than the *open Pulpit*’, Foster declared, ‘to tell Gods plaine truth’. As well as directly criticising the Cathedral canons, it will be argued, Foster also used the strategy of praise as a means of both constructing the reputation and even directing the practice of Bishop Hall. The sermon also draws attention to the failure of local magistrates to live up to their paternalistic duties. Where it does promote a positive model of magisterial activism, it places this firmly within an urban setting. In this charitable ideal we can detect a combination of the principles of *societas* and *civitas*: Foster extolled a Christian community united and strengthened by the ‘natural’ bonds of mutual love and charity but at the same time recognised the need for external authority to enforce this.⁸

The importance of these ‘political’ aspects of Foster’s sermon is disclosed, it will be argued, by an understanding of a variety of local contests for power and influence. These include Bishop Hall’s disputes with ambitious local clergy and his struggle to claim the middle ground of ‘moderation’; jurisdictional wrangles between the Cathedral and the Exeter corporation; and, crucially, Foster’s personal power struggle with the most influential of his parishioners, Sir

⁷ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.2, 11, 17, 25.

⁸ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.8; Fideler, ‘*Societas, Civitas* and Elizabethan Poverty Relief’, pp.59-69.

Edmund Prideaux. From his own parish church to the court of Star Chamber, Foster fought a running battle with Prideaux, and with the common informer, Henry Sherring, at least until 1624 and probably until Prideaux's death in 1628.⁹ This chapter therefore considers the motivations behind, and influence of, Foster's sermon, not only with regard to its principal targets, but also in terms of its cultural construction of both economic change and of the ideal preaching minister.

I

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CONTEXT: THE POLITICS OF 'MODERATION'

I.i. The Troubles of Joseph Hall

Foster was appointed as assize preacher by Joseph Hall, bishop of Exeter from 1627. Hall was naturally at the centre of ecclesiastical politics in the diocese and his prolific published writings made him an important voice in national theological discourse. By the early 1630s his reputation as a moderate Calvinist divine had been assailed from both sides of the ecclesiological spectrum.¹⁰ The puritan preacher Henry Burton's *The seven vials* (1628) and *Babel no Bethel* (1629) had attacked Hall's contention that the Roman church was a 'true' church, albeit with an anti-Christian heart.¹¹ Around the same time, however, Hall faced

⁹ PRO STAC 8/146/12.

¹⁰ For Hall's 'moderation' and determination to preserve a putative Elizabethan consensus see D. Steere, 'Bishop Joseph Hall Defends the *Via Media* in an Age of Extremes, 1601-1656', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27:3 (1996), 749-65. For the increasingly difficult position faced by Hall and other Calvinists following the polarisation of the religious terrain from the late 1620s see K. Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor*; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, ch.8; K. Fincham and P. Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism in the 1630s: Joseph Hall Explains Himself', *EHR* 111:443 (September 1996), 856-81.

¹¹ A. Milton, 'The Church of England, Rome, and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus', in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p.207. Cf. Joseph Hall, *The old religion* (1628) and *The reconciler* (1629). Burton claimed before High Commission that *Babel no Bethel* was aimed at Hall's defenders, Hugh Cholmley and Robert Butterfield (PRO SP 16/142/40).

rumours that he was a 'favourer of puritans', a slur which, he claimed, struck 'deepe into my reputation'. This whispering campaign may well have been started by Martin Nansogg, Hall's ambitious former chaplain and client of Lord Buckingham, who had fallen out with the bishop over his failed preferment to the archdeaconry of Cornwall in 1629.¹² In practice, Hall's diocesan policy focused on the promotion of an effective preaching ministry within the boundaries of conformity: he revived weekday lectures in the Cathedral, patronised moderate puritan ministers in the city and continued even into the 1630s to use 'gentle perswasions' to reclaim 'obstinate' nonconformists.¹³ There is no reason to believe that he objected to the sins of great men being challenged from the pulpit. In his own preaching, as we have seen, Hall combined self-fashioning as 'peacemaker' with a harsh critique of social injustice. Particular preaching, on the other hand, was explicitly identified as a threat to parochial peace. In his visitation articles of 1631 and 1638 Hall included the inquiry '[w]hether your minister...hath reviled, railed, or inveighed against any particular person of your parish: naming any partie by circumlocution, description, or by other signification and meaning'.¹⁴ Moreover, Hall was sufficiently wary of the potential dangers of human creativity in the pulpit to lend his support and praise

¹² 'The Bishop of Exeter his apology upon a report that went of him to bee a favourer of puritans. Written to a frind of his living at the kings court' (Somerset Record Office, DD/PH 332, no.40), transcribed in Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism', 876-81. In this leaked letter Hall attributes the slander to 'a divine of my diocese'. The identification of this divine with Martin Nansogg is suggested by Hall's complaint, in a letter to Bishop Laud in May 1630, of libellous words from his former chaplain, which he described as a 'businesse wherein I perceave my reputacion deeply ingaged' (PRO SP 16/166/71). For further details of the Hall-Nansogg dispute see SP 16/166/40, SP 16/193/69. For Nansogg's preferments in Devon and Cornwall see DRO Chanter 22, fos.3^r, 7^v, 8^r.

¹³ Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism', 870-73. For the revival of the Cathedral lectures after 1627 see I.W. Gowers, 'Puritanism in the County of Devon between 1570 and 1641' (University of Exeter MA Thesis, 1970), ch.4.

¹⁴ Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Records*, II, pp. 11, 203. Cf. DRO CC 178: Articles of complaint against William Warmington of Yarnscomb (1634), which mentioned Warmington's particular preaching against the morality of his parishioners and in particular against 'some gentlemen & men of quality of the parish'. For Hall's critical preaching see above, ch.1, p.116.

in 1633 to a text defending a reading ministry and the self-revelatory power of Scripture.¹⁵

In a 'semi-private' letter, composed between 1631 and 1634, Hall responded to the accusations of his complicity in the growth of puritanism and sedition in his diocese. He sought to affirm his 'moderation' by pointing out that he had been 'buffeted on both sides . . . wronged by those whome I am now censured to cherish'. He defined 'Puritanism' as 'refractory opposition to the government, rites, and customes of the church' and insisted he had done all he could to root out 'contentious singularity . . . and peevish distempers of misplaced zeale'. The problem in his diocese was not the strength of 'faction' but those clergy 'who give themselves to carelesse, lazy, and unministerlike courses, seldome preaching' and who – assisted by a 'profanely affected layty' – enviously labelled diligent and zealous ministers 'how peaceable soever, as puritan and factious'.¹⁶

This rhetorical strategy was reinforced by Hall's loyal preachers. Preaching at the Exeter visitation in 1631, John Bury described how the bishop had been 'buffeted on both cheekes by the *two extreames*'. Both enemy camps combined in the double-faced figure of Belial: 'no wonder that, if while you breake his head, he bite at your heele; traducing both your holy peaceablenesse, as not enemy enough to Rome, and your peaceable holines, as too much friend to Faction'. In actual fact, Bury claimed, Hall was intent on 'weeding out the tares of schisme, without pulling up any corne of true piety'. Other parties, however, implicitly challenged Hall's attempt to occupy the middle ground. The puritan

¹⁵ Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism', 865. The text was John Downe's *Certaine treatises* (Oxford, 1633), to which Hall contributed a letter praising Downe's learning and Latin verse. Downe was minister of Instow, near Barnstaple, from 1604 to 1631.

¹⁶ 'The Bishop of Exceter his apology', 878-90.

alderman Ignatius Jorden was highly critical of Bishop Hall's refusal to condemn the Book of Sports. When Hall reminded Jorden that 'there are many eyes upon me', the alderman replied in a typically audacious tone, 'Yea, my lord . . . the eyes of God and His holy angels to see how you discharge your office and duty as the King's chaplain and a Bishop of the Church'. Perhaps this admonition had some effect, as Hall never rigorously enforced the reading of the Book.¹⁷

I.ii. The Godly City and the Cathedral Chapter

Jorden's criticism of the bishop was one manifestation of the potential for conflict between the ecclesiastical and civic authorities in Exeter. There was a long history of jurisdictional disputes and petty quarrels between these two bodies, often involving the bishop himself.¹⁸ Bishop Carey's bid to become a JP in the city in 1622 was ultimately unsuccessful but nevertheless attracted the support of the king.¹⁹ Disagreements over privilege continued in the years surrounding Foster's sermon. One of the altercations in 1631 involved Hall alleging a 'wilfull violacion' of Cathedral privileges by Ignatius Jorden. A year earlier the bishop supported the dean and chapter in defending their monopoly

¹⁷ John Bury, *The moderate Christian. A sermon preached at Exeter at a triennial visitation of the Reverend Father . . . Joseph [Hall]. . . March 24 1630* (1631), sigs.A3^v-A4^r (Epistle); Ferdinando Nicholls, *The life and death of Mr. Ignatius Jurdain, one of the aldermen of the City of Exeter, who departed this life July 15th 1640* (1654), sigs.a2^v-a3^r ('To the Reader'); Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism', 873.

¹⁸ For a summary of these disputes see principally M. Curtis, *Some Disputes between the City and Cathedral Authorities of Exeter* (Manchester, 1932), *passim* and W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, 1958), pp.200-01, 218-20. For the wider context see C. F. Patterson, 'Corporations, Cathedrals and the Crown: Local Dispute and Royal Interest in Early Stuart England', *History* 85:280 (October 2000), 546-71 (549-51 and 556 deal with Exeter disputes). The correspondence relating to these can be found in HMC, *Report on the Records of the City of Exeter* (London, 1916), *passim*.

¹⁹ HMC, *Exeter*, pp.120, 123, 128. For a similar clash in 1615 between the city's magistrates and Bishop William Cotton, during which the mayor accused Cotton of trying to extend the limits of the Cathedral's jurisdiction 'in more earnest and resolute manner' than any previous bishop, see HMC, *Exeter*, pp.93-94.

over the city's schooling, despite the apparently dubious credentials of their appointed schoolmaster. It is possible that the city's governing chamber had grown in confidence after it secured a new and more comprehensive charter in 1627, which granted increased powers and independence to the Exeter JPs and increased the financial security of the city.²⁰

Within the governing structures of the Cathedral itself, members of the chapter could become potential rivals to Bishop Hall's authority. By the beginning of his episcopate, the most influential canons had gained the upper hand over the Church's finances and were receiving significant private income from entry fines and the leasing of tithes. Attempts by the bishop and dean to reform this practice met with opposition from a chapter apparently determined to retain its independence from ecclesiastical superiors.²¹ The polemical tide would soon turn against such independence, however, with the instigation of Laudian reforms in ecclesiastical finance and a growing insistence on the 'beauty of holiness'.²² Despite his opposition to Laudianism, Hall might be seen to have pre-empted these reforms when, in the spring of 1631, he managed to persuade

²⁰ MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.28; HMC, *Exeter*, pp.26-27, 47-48 [Joseph Hall's letters to the mayor of Exeter between 1629 and 1631], 134-59 [dispute over schooling]. Relations between William Perriman, the schoolmaster of 'The ancient school of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter' (cf. *CSPD 1629-31*, p.297), and the Exeter magistrates, were tempestuous throughout the 1620s and Perriman was fighting against the Chamber's plans to erect a new school as early as 1625. The corporation accused Perriman of taking exorbitant fees from his scholars 'and other ill carriage', as well as pointing out that he had no University degree (HMC, *Exeter*, pp.151-59).

²¹ J.A. Vage, 'The Diocese of Exeter 1591-1641: A Study of Church Government in the Age of the Reformation' (University of Cambridge Ph.D. Thesis, 1991), ch.3. William Peterson was appointed dean in July 1629 and was married to Hall's daughter in the same month (G. Oliver, *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter and a History of the Cathedral* (Exeter, 1861), p.276 and 276n).

²² Hill, *Economic Problems*, ch.14. For contemporary polemics on the 'beauty of holiness' see, for example, Giles Fleming, *Magnificence exemplified: and the repaire of Saint Pauls exhorted unto* (London, 1634) and R. T., *De templis, A treatise of temples* (London, 1638). I owe these references to Ian Atherton.

the canons to redirect some of their profits to the exchequer and fabric of the Cathedral.²³

One area in which Hall could not so easily intervene as peacemaker or 'moderate', was in the canons' attainment of funds from impropriations and benefices other than the Cathedral stall. Hall may have been able to curb some of the excesses of William Hellier, archdeacon of Barnstaple, who had cannily built up the largest share of the profits of the capitular estates. He nevertheless agreed to the continuation of Hellier's lease of tithes in Colyton, a rectory impropriate to the dean and chapter.²⁴ William and Edward Cotton, two of the most powerful canons and sons of a former bishop, were incumbent in no less than six profitable livings between them by 1615.²⁵ Edward Cotton also served on the county bench between 1628 and 1630, whilst another prebend and pluralist, Dr Thomas Clifford, was continually active as a county JP between 1622 and 1631.²⁶ By the time Foster preached against clerical avarice, these men may already have gained a local reputation for placing their own interests before those of the church and commonwealth. Certainly Edward Cotton was the subject of 'scandalous notes

²³ Vage, 'Diocese of Exeter', pp.374-81; Exeter Cathedral Archive DC 3601, fo.73^r. The favouring of high entry fines and short leases over improved rents was also criticised by clergymen who were opposed to Arminian 'innovations', such as Peter Smart at Durham (see Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.7). Under Laud's influence, the privy council took steps to end this practice in 1633, noting that 'the present deane and chapter putt greate funds into their purses to enrich themselves their wifes and children and leave their Successors of what deserts soever . . . and the church destitute of that growing meanes which els would come in to helpe them' (Copy in DRO Chanter 57, fo.17^r. Cf. Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.311).

²⁴ Vage, 'Diocese of Exeter', pp.269, 374; Exeter Cathedral Archive DC 3601, fos.99^r-100^r.

²⁵ Walker, *Sufferings*, pp.24, 26; *Alumni Oxon*, I, pp.334, 337. William Cotton the elder was bishop of Exeter from 1589 until his death in 1621. *Alumni Oxon* records the presentation of Edward Cotton to four livings by 1615: two in Cornwall (Duloe and St Peter Tavy) and two in Devon (Bridestowe and Shobrooke). By 1613 William Cotton the younger was rector of Silvertown and Whimble, both in Devon.

²⁶ DRO Q/SO/6, pp.186, 303 [this and subsequent references to the Devon Quarter Sessions Orders use page numbers added at a later date to the manuscript volumes]; Q/SO/5-6, *passim*. See also *APC 1628*, p.269 (Letter from Doctor Clifford and two others to the Lord Bishop of Exeter, 19 December 1628). Clifford was appointed to the vicarage of Harberton in 1629 (DRO Chanter 22, fo.11^v). His existing cure of Ilsington was being served by a curate in 1632 (Chanter 218, fo.68^v).

and articles' by the radical preacher John Haydon in 1628 and in the 1630s he may have been trying to avoid assessment for the poor rate in respect of one of his livings.²⁷ Both William and Edward Cotton had substantial temporal estates by the 1640s, whilst Clifford had earlier inherited his family seat of Ugbrook Park near Chudleigh and purchased land elsewhere in the county.²⁸ Whether or not the actions and priorities of these men attracted any more negative attention than the numerous other examples of wealth and good fortune among cathedral clergy across the land, it is arguable that they were brought particularly sharply into focus for Thomas Foster. Foster's birthplace of Bradninch was immediately adjacent to William Cotton's birthplace of Silverton. Whilst the living in the former was a poor perpetual curacy, the latter was a profitable rectory, held first by Cotton's father and then effectively passed on to his son in 1613.²⁹ When Foster moved to Farway, he was merely a few miles from Hellier's goldmine at Colyton. Before moving on to Foster's experience as a parochial clergyman, however, we must examine the broader economic background to *The scourge of covetousnesse*.

²⁷ PRO SP 16/119/22; J.S Cockburn (ed.), *Western Circuit Assize Orders 1629-1648: A Calendar* (Camden Society 4th ser. 17, London, 1976), p.158 (Devon assizes at Exeter Castle, 11 July 1638). For the 'defensive war' waged by several rectors against the poor rates imposed on their glebes and tithes in the later seventeenth century see Hindle, *On the Parish*, p.373.

²⁸ Walker, *Sufferings*, pp.24, 26; DRO Z 12/11/5.

²⁹ By the nineteenth century Silverton was worth more than seven times the perpetual curacy at Bradninch (White, *Devonshire*, pp.284, 296). Silverton was valued at £51 8s 4d in 1535 but Bradninch does not appear to have been valued at this time.

II THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT: POVERTY AND DEARTH

II.i. Conjunctural Crises

Foster preached his social gospel at the height of the dearth of 1629-31 in a region with a high concentration of wage-earning households dependent on access to the corn markets.³⁰ By the early seventeenth century the eastern region of Devon had become renowned for the cloth industry that had developed over the previous 300 years.³¹ Foster's birthplace of Bradninch and his first living of Uffculme were among the small towns and villages for which early signs of enclosure for pasture and the pursuit of industrial by-employments are extant. The populations of these areas continued to rise during the early modern period – Uffculme probably experienced a threefold increase between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries – and the larger centres of production, such as Exeter and Tiverton, also acted as magnets for landless labourers.³² In 1600 John

³⁰ At the end of February 1631 the price of wheat in Dartmouth market was 9s 9d a bushel and a month later had risen to 10s (PRO SP 16/186/22, 16/186/22, 16/188/15). In east Devon, where the wheat bushel was smaller, it sold at 12s in April 1631 (SP 16/189/5). This was around 3s a bushel more than in the markets of the Kingsclere division of Hampshire, also a clothing county (SP 16/186/23). Similar prices were experienced in the early 1620s: even though prices in the north-east of the county had 'lessened' by 1623 wheat remained at 9s a bushel in the market at Crediton in April (SP 14/144/32 i, iv). For a comparison of corn prices by the gallon over the first four months of 1623 and from January to November 1631 see T. Gray, *Harvest Failure in Cornwall and Devon: The Book of Orders and the Corn Surveys of 1623 and 1630-1* (Institute of Cornish Studies 1, Plymouth, 1992), p.xxxi.

³¹ W.J. Blake (ed.), 'Hooker's Synopsis Chorographical of Devonshire (1600)', *Transactions of the Devon Association* 47 (1915), 346 (cf. BL Harl. MS 5827); Thomas Westcote, *A view of Devonshire in 1630 with a pedigree of most of its gentry*, ed. G. Oliver and P. Jones (Exeter, 1845), p.60; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.160-61. For the development of rural industries among densely populated communities of farmers pursuing a pastoral economy based either upon dairying or breeding see J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England*, pp.70-88.

³² P. Wyatt and R. Stanes, *Uffculme: A Peculiar Parish. A Devon Town from Tudor Times* (Uffculme, 1997), pp.6-7 (a population rise from around 830 in 1570 to 2,194 in 1713). Exeter's population rose by at least 30 per cent between the 1570s and the 1630s (MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.11-13: a population rise from a minimum of 7,600 in 1570 to a minimum of 10,000 in 1638). The population of Tiverton may have doubled in the thirty years from 1560 to 1590 (W.G. Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and People in Exeter 1688-1800* (Manchester, 1935), p.13: an estimated population rise from 2,500 to 5,000, made by an eighteenth-century antiquary).

Hooker described how the manufacture of kersey cloth was so common ‘that there is no market nor village nor scarce any privat mannes house where in theise clothes be not made, or that there is not spynninge and cordinge for the same’.³³ The only industry that had rivalled that of textile manufacture was tin mining on Dartmoor. Although this industry was in decline by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the mining of this resource may have been partly responsible for the well-developed trade of money-lending that was clearly apparent in Devon in the latter half of the sixteenth century.³⁴

The Devonshire kersies, like the old draperies of Suffolk, suffered from the long-term decay in exports brought about by increased foreign competition and economic breakdown on the continent.³⁵ At the height of the conjunctural crisis of the early 1620s, there were apparently 300 poor weavers in Exeter ‘which go about the streets to crave relief by begging, because they can get no work’.³⁶ Trade was also disrupted by the plague of 1625-26. The withdrawal of ‘many Mercers, Grossers, Drapers, Haberdashers and other trades of this Citty’, also caused a drastic reduction in the income from poor rates.³⁷ By the time Foster came to preach at Exeter, it was the new draperies that were in crisis. Whilst this industry never achieved the dominant place in Devon that it occupied

³³ ‘Hooker’s Synopsis Chorographical of Devonshire’, 346.

³⁴ W.G. Hoskins, *Devon* (London, 1954), pp.132-33; Jones, *God and the Moneylenders*, pp.72-75 (from evidence recovered in the Exchequer special commission (E 178/3087) sent into Devon and Cornwall in 1570/1 to investigate infractions of the usury laws). The boom in Devon’s tin trade occurred in the early sixteenth century, with production beginning to fall from the 1520s.

³⁵ Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, p.140; P. Sharpe, *Population and Society in an East Devon Parish: Reproducing Colyton 1540-1840* (Exeter, 2002), pp.78-79.

³⁶ G. Roberts (ed.), *The Diary of Walter Yonge esq. Written at Colyton and Axminster, Co. Devon from 1604 to 1628* (Camden Society old ser. 41, London, 1848), p.56.

³⁷ PRO SP 16/12/68 (Letter from Exeter’s mayor Thomas Walker to the privy council, 27 December 1625). For the particular susceptibility of the northern half of Devon to disease see P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.91-93 and P. Slack, ‘Mortality Crisis and Epidemic Disease in England, 1485-1610’, in C. Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.29, 34-35.

in the Stour valley, the manufacture of serges and perpetuanos could nevertheless be described by one commentator in 1630 as 'in great use and request with us'.³⁸ The pressure on resources in the east of Devon was exacerbated by the development of the lace industry in Honiton and Bradninch in the early seventeenth century. By the late 1630s, the overseers of the poor of Honiton were complaining that their town was 'like to come into great poverty' due to the great number of 'poore out of divers places that are brought into the trade of bone lace makinge'.³⁹

Although much of Devon was given over to pasture, there were areas, particularly in the south of the county, where arable farming on enclosed grounds predominated. Newly reclaimed wasteland in the east of the county might also be put under the plough. In 1630 it was claimed that the county could barely feed itself and had become dependent on imports. This was due in part to the widespread development of commercial farming that fed the demand from populous cities, including London, and from overseas fisheries.⁴⁰ The grain surveys of 1623 suggest that several of those with large surpluses of corn were merchants, such as 'Mr Guine' of Harberton, who had over 200 bushels of wheat to spare or Richard Rich of Blackawton, who held extensive arable land across three parishes. There were also a number of prominent gentlemen farmers with

³⁸ Hoskins, *Devon*, pp.127-30; Sharpe, *Reproducing Colyton*, pp.80-81; Westcote, *A view of Devonshire*, pp.60-61. For the boom in the Exeter serge trade at the end of the seventeenth century see Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and People*, pp.14-17.

³⁹ Westcote, *A view of Devonshire*, p.62; G.F.R. Spenceley, 'The Origins of the English Pillow Lace Industry', *AgHR* 21 (1973), 87; Cockburn (ed.), *Western Circuit Assize Orders*, p.149 (Devon assizes at Exeter Castle, 12 March 1638 [order relating to petition from overseers of Honiton]).

⁴⁰ Westcote, *A View of Devonshire*, p.62; T. Risdon, *The chorographical description or survey of the county of Devon* (London, 1811), p.7; Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and People*, pp.95-96; Gray, *Harvest Failure in Cornwall and Devon*, pp.xxxiii-xxxv.

significant surpluses of grain, such as William Bastard of West Alvington, a JP in 1630, and Francis Fortescue of Woodleigh.⁴¹

II.ii. Magisterial and Clerical Responses

The narratives of magisterial activism that emerged out of these crises suggest a combination of pragmatism, diligence and exasperation. They also hint at a degree of tension between the desire for central support and the preservation of local autonomy. During the plague of 1625, for example, many of the magistrates fled into the safety of countryside. Into the breach at this time stepped Ignatius Jorden, devout puritan and former mayor of the city, who obtained money from across the region with which to relieve ‘many hundreds’ of poor. As well as providing them with funds at the entrance to his shop he was said to have had ‘a *special respect to poor House-keepers and Tradesmen*, such as were ashamed or unwilling to make their poor and sad condition known’. When the mayor returned, however, he warned the privy council that the poor ‘threatened by violence to releevve themsleves’ and successfully requested action against the ‘very dangerous’ example of the city’s overseer of the poor, who refused to execute his office.⁴² In the dearth of the early 1620s the county magistrates offered brief reports to the council, declaring their successful attempts to suppress maltsters, engrossers and alehouses and their assiduous attendance at market to supply the poor with corn at under-prices. At their sessions in 1622

⁴¹ PRO SP 14/144/32: vii [Guine]; xv, xxv, xxxiii [Rich]; v [Bastard]; x [Fortescue]; DRO Q/SO/6, p.289. For the full transcript of, and commentary on, this grain survey see Gray, *Harvest Failure in Cornwall and Devon*, pp.xiv-xvi, 9-39,.

⁴² Nicholls, *The life and death of Mr. Ignatius Jurdain*, pp.14-15; PRO SP 16/12/68. For the privy council’s orders to the mayor and magistrates to return to Exeter see *APC 1625-6*, pp.217, 312, 422.

they assured the council that there was 'no occasion for a provost marshal to take government of the county' since the effective institution of watch and ward was sufficient 'for the preventinge of all tummultuous and riotous assemblies'.⁴³

In an attempt to keep local markets supplied with corn during the dearth of 1629-31, the Devonshire justices halted the transportation of corn to populous inland areas such as Bristol. This 'strict coursse' in observance of the Book of Orders was overturned by the council in November 1630, in response to a petition from Bristol's governors. Throughout this period the county magistrates continued to issue orders restricting regrating and the conversion of barley into malt.⁴⁴ By April 1631, however, justices from the Eastern Division were warning of the 'complainte amonge the poore that they cannot gett come for money' in markets that remained 'very thynly furnished', despite the repeated issuing of 'warrants to supply that deserte'.⁴⁵ In November, JPs from the Tiverton area concluded that genuine scarcity rather than human greed was responsible for the continued dearth. They informed the privy council that there was no corn left hoarded up from the previous year's harvest and that they had 'found the . . . cornemasters and farmors verye conformeable in bringinge forth their come into the marketts'. The dearth of 1630-31 had thus grown 'by reason of the scarcitie of come (which was farre inferyor to the plentye of other yeeres) rather than by any combination or indirecte practise of anye cornmasters or Farmors of these partes'.⁴⁶

⁴³ DRO Q/SO/5 (1618-25), p.285 (13 March 1621/2); PRO SP 14/132/99 (JPs of Devon to the privy council, 15 August 1622).

⁴⁴ *APC 1630-31*, p.125 [Order for the transportation of corn to Bristol]; DRO Q/SO/6 (1626-33), pp.137, 177, 230, 242, 289, 299, 309-10 [orders against maltsters and others]. For the recurrent role of Bristol's grain needs in provoking riots in the West Country see Walter and Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order', 27.

⁴⁵ PRO SP 16/189/5 (Certificate for the hundreds of Axminster, Colyton, East Budleigh, Ottery St Mary and Cliston, in the Eastern Division of Devon).

Foster was not of course the only clergyman to confront the problem of dearth. The closest parallel to our author comes in the form of the Cornish clergyman Charles Fitz-Geffry, whose county experienced similar problems in the supply of grain.⁴⁷ A brief analysis of this text is worthwhile, since it will provide interesting points of comparison with Foster's sermon when we come to look at this in detail. Fitz-Geffry preached the three sermons contained in his *Curse of corne-horders* at the county quarter sessions during the dearth of 1621-23. These were published in 1631, as a response to the infliction of the 'same punishments . . . this yeere on sundry places of the land'. Fitz-Geffry clearly believed that the central message of his original orations – 'this Dearth is not inflicted immediately by the hand of God, but enforced by wicked mens cruell covetousnesse' – was equally relevant to this second period of distress. His sermons exhort farmers to bring their grain to market, condemning the 'rurall Tyrants' who failed to do so.

The focus in Fitz-Geffry's sermons is therefore initially on the provision of corn and the local magistrates' responsibility to enforce this with the 'mysticall Corne' of 'Justice and Equity'. Towards the end of the text, however, Fitz-Geffry sought to persuade the justices, in their position as landlords, to match the 'charitable selling' of their tenants with their own 'bountifull giving'. Hospitality, 'at all times commendable, in these hard times is Royall . . . make your houses Hospitals for the poore', he urged. They were also encouraged to supervise the over-seers of the poor and 'if need be, to be a *Deacon* in ministring

⁴⁶ PRO SP 16/203/56. This contrasts with Laud's contention in Star Chamber after the trials of several alleged hoarders of corn that 'this last years famine was made by man and not by God' (Gardiner (ed.), *Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission*, p.46).

⁴⁷ Charles Fitz-Geffry, *The curse of corne-horders: with the blessing of seasonable selling. In three sermons* (London, 1631); Gray, *Harvest Failure in Cornwall and Devon*, pp.xvi-xvii.

and distributing to the necessities of the brethren'. When the author directly addressed the poor, 'for whome I have spoken all this while', they were reminded (presumably *in absentia*) that they had no warrant 'to be impatient, & to revenge [their] wrongs with execrations and curses'. Poor men should rather concern themselves with their own repentance: 'Your grudging, your murmuring, your unthankfulness, these, and the like, have caused God to harden the hearts of men against you'. Thus despite his earlier assertion that the covetousness of corn-hoarders was the chief cause of dearth's continuance, Fitz-Geffry ensured that his entire audience was left with the 'doctrine of judgements' ringing in its ears: 'Sinne, sin is the procurer of Dearth, and of all other disasters besides.'⁴⁸

Economic crises and an intensification of the problem of poverty in early seventeenth-century Devon thus produced diverse responses. These ranged from the city authorities turning their attention to the 'shamefaced' poor; through the county magistrates' insistence that they had done all they could to ensure the supply of local markets; to a clergyman's call for more extensive hospitality. Foster would address some of these themes in his sermon at Exeter but remained silent on others. Crucial in the formulation of these textual choices was his pastoral experience in the parish of Farway.

⁴⁸ Fitz-Geffry, *The curse of corne-horders*, sig.B2^v (Epistle), pp.22-23, 33, 49-53. For clerical explanations of dearth drawing on the 'doctrine of judgements' see Walter and Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order', 28-31.

III ASPIRATIONS, IDEALS AND TENSIONS IN THE PARISH OF FARWAY

III.i. Individualism and Community

A small parish, lying for the most part in the secluded Coly valley and largely devoted to agriculture, Farway was at first sight a cultural world away from the machinations and ambitions of the nearby Cathedral city or the precarious existence of the clothworking towns.⁴⁹ As we attempt to reconstruct Foster's experience here, however, we uncover some of the tensions that we have come across in the previous two sections: the struggle to balance the pursuit of individual advancement against the collective good; attempts to maintain a sense of harmony and brotherly community in the face of socio-economic pressures; some widely divergent fortunes; and, perhaps most importantly, a highly-charged relationship between clerical and magisterial authority.

The scattered distribution of farms and substantial freehold properties around the parish suggests that, like most of east Devon, Farway's arable lands had been enclosed during the late medieval period. The surviving glebe terriers reinforce this impression and intimate that much of this land had been converted to pasture by the early seventeenth century.⁵⁰ The virtual absence of inventory material for Devon makes it difficult accurately to characterise the agrarian economy of the parish. The few inventories that do survive suggest that Farway was typical of the east Devon region as a whole in bearing the marks of a 'wood-

⁴⁹ Farway is only 2500 acres in size and had a population of around 324 in 1676 (*Compton Census*, p.273: 216 communicants).

⁵⁰ H.S.A. Fox, 'The Chronology of Enclosure and Economic Development in Medieval Devon', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 28:2 (1975), 181-202; Hoskins, *Devon*, p.49; Hoskins and H.P.R. Finberg, *Devonshire Studies* (London, 1952), p.274; DRO Farway Glebe Terriers, c.1600, 1680. The distribution of farms is suggested in the Churchwardens 'course' drawn up in 1564 (DRO 67A/PW1, fo.16').

pasture' district.⁵¹ As the populations of semi-industrial areas continued to grow and new techniques allowed for increasing expansion onto the wastes, opportunities opened up for the commercial production not only of wool, meat and dairy products but also of grain and crops such as hops, honey and fruit.⁵²

Farway is likely to have benefited particularly from new techniques in the cultivation of wasteland since it had a relatively large upland stretch that rose some 800 feet above the parish.⁵³ Between 1564 and 1631 at least fifteen new farms were created. The names of these 'dyvers dwellers which have groundes to their tenements and belonginge to their dwellinge houses' were somewhat belatedly added to the list of thirty 'Auncyent Inhabytantes', on which the churchwardens rota was based.⁵⁴ Although the authors of this memorandum note that some of these 'new dwellers' might not be 'sufficyent to doe their wardingshippe', some at least were reasonably wealthy by the time of their

⁵¹ DRO CC 6A/286 (Inventory of Peter Philmore of Farway, husbandman, 27 April 1632). Although badly damaged, this manuscript does record sheep to the value of £10, equipment for the making of cheese and processed meat, and grain worth only £2. See also M. Cash (ed.), *Devon Inventories of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Devon County Record Society new ser. 11, Torquay, 1966), p.138 (Inventory of John Vicary of Farway, yeoman, 18 September 1674). Vicary had stock to the value of around £80 whilst his grain was worth only around £15. He also possessed equipment for cheese-making and the preparation of meat. For the characterisation of the rural economy of east Devon as 'a typical wood-pasture district' see Fox, 'Chronology of Enclosure', 195.

⁵² W.G. Hoskins, 'The Reclamation of the Waste in Devon, 1550-1800', *EcHR* 1st ser. 13 (1943), 80-92. Cf. DRO CC 6B/19 (Tithe dispute between Thomas Foster and William Clapp of Farway, 1633). Clapp, it was recorded, had a flock of 300 sheep for shearing and a further 100 for their meat along with twenty acres each of wheat, rye, barley, oats, beans and peas. His fruit yielded £28 per year. For evidence of the farming of enclosed commons and the enclosure of meadowland in the seventeenth century see DRO 67A/PW1, fo.18^v (where the 'common moor' at Netherton is in the hands of a single farmer by 1631); WCSL AWC 11/39 (will of Robert Cox the elder of Farway, husbandman, 25 July 1682); DRO Farway Glebe Terrier, 1680.

⁵³ A. Warburton-Cox, *The Cox Family of Devon and Oakhouse, Axminster in the County of Devon* (Exeter, 1935), p.7.

⁵⁴ DRO 67A/PW1, fos.16^v, 20^r. As early as 1614 one inhabitant asked to be spared service as churchwarden 'untill the new dwellers have past [th]rough and don this Seryce, as it is fyt they should' (67A/PW1, fo.15^v). The baptism registers of 1625-28 show that several of the 'new dwellers' were incorporated into the churchwardens' rota during this period (DRO 67A/PR1).

deaths.⁵⁵ Fortunes were also mixed among the ‘auncyent inhabytantes’, as the ending of lines of inheritance and an active land market caused patterns of ownership to change and allowed younger members of established families to begin to carve out new dynasties.⁵⁶ Occupation of the office of churchwarden nevertheless gradually became more rather than less socially restrictive after 1631. In part this was due to the continued purchase and consolidation of farmland by the resident lord, Peter Prideaux, who served in connection with four different tenements between 1658 and 1676.⁵⁷

The arrival of the Prideaux family in Farway in the late sixteenth century significantly altered the balance of social relations in the parish. Sir Edmund Prideaux, an eminent lawyer and younger son of a local gentleman, purchased the demesnes and lordship of the manor of Netherton in 1588 and thereby became the first resident manorial lord for many years.⁵⁸ Sir Edmund’s superior wealth and status – confirmed by his attaining the title of baronet in 1622 and by his regular service as a county magistrate – was displayed in the grandeur of the newly built Netherton Hall. Before his death in 1628 he had secured substantial estates for his two sons, Peter and Edmund. A later antiquary

⁵⁵ DRO 67A/PW1, fos.19^v-20^r. Members of the Cox family who are recorded on this list of new dwellers left goods worth at least 13s 6d and in one case as much as £87 0s 4d (AWC 11/39: Copies of wills in Cox Family File in WCSL).

⁵⁶ The principal example of this is Richard Bucknoll, who by 1631 had obtained the farm of Idehill ‘which in former tyme was belonginge to Thomas Perryes at Ameshaies’ (DRO 67A/PW1, fo.17^v). The Richard Bucknoll on the list of ‘new dwellers’ who had obtained ‘Bove haies & Stone haies Crufte sometyme Robert Whykers tenement’ (fo.20^v) may have been the same person, or his younger son, born on 23 January 1610/11 (DRO 67A/PR1).

⁵⁷ DRO 67A/PW1, fo.23^r. For the increasing service of gentry in the office of churchwarden after the Restoration see E.J. Carlson, ‘The Origins, Function, and Status of the Office of Churchwarden, with Particular Reference to the Diocese of Ely’ in M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters: 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p.193.

⁵⁸ J. Prince, *The worthies of Devon. A work, wherein the lives and fortunes of the most famous divines, statesmen, swordsmen, physicians, writers, and other eminent persons . . . are memorized* (Exeter, 1810), pp.650-53; Prest, *Rise of the Barristers*, p.385. Farway parish fell within the jurisdiction of three manors: Farway (of which Foster’s patron John Willoughby was lord), Netherton and Southleigh.

commented with pride on Prideaux's 'raising a family in this county, both for title and estate, much greater than most of his ancestors'.⁵⁹

The boom in the market for land brought a further threat to the place of Farway's yeoman families. In the 1590s, William Hoskins, a prosperous draper who styled himself 'gent.', purchased the large freehold of Boycombe. Hoskins' efforts at expansion onto the common were resisted, however, by the customary tenants of Farway manor, some of whom were themselves substantial yeoman farmers. By the late 1620s the Hoskins family had disappeared from Farway and this freehold had become instead the basis for the expanded wealth of an established family.⁶⁰

Apart from their place in local office and on the manorial court jury, the yeomen of Farway could also turn to the parish church to confirm or construct their status as exemplary 'chief inhabitants'. In 1628 two of these men paid for the re-building and extension of part of the church. Both perhaps felt some pressure to achieve a visible and lasting representation of their status: Richard Bucknoll was a younger son of an ancient family who had only recently carved out a 'new' farm in the parish, whilst Humphrey Hutchins was probably the first of his family to reside in Farway. Their efforts were recorded for posterity in the form of inscriptions on the interior wall of the church. Bucknoll's role, in fact, was registered in an epitaph composed by Thomas Foster himself. On a small plaque, Foster noted that Bucknoll's 'zealous care was th'efficient cause / to

⁵⁹ N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: South Devon* (Harmondsworth, 1952), p.210. The House had 22 hearths in 1674 (T.L. Stoate (ed.), *Devon Hearth Tax Return: Lady Day 1674* (Bristol, 1982), p.2); DRO 49/9/31/1 (Deed of 1611); PRO C 142/452/32: Inquisition Post Mortem 5 Chas. I (1629); Prince, *The worthies of Devon*, p.651.

⁶⁰ BL Add. Ch. 13858 (Farway Manorial Court Rolls, 1619); W.G. Hoskins, 'The Ownership and Occupation of the Land in Devonshire, 1650-1800' (University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1938), p.178; W.G. Hoskins, *The Hoskins Family of Devon and Dorset* (Exeter, 1939), pp.135-36.

build this Fabrick for the use of God's Lawes' and described him as 'in Life a Saint in death a happie soule'.⁶¹ Other benevolent works lacked this public record but are important to note nonetheless. In 1631 two wealthy farmers, William Pomeroy and John Cox, built 'the seate . . . in the newe Ile for the use of the parishe'. As Pomeroy's wealth increased he built further pews specifically for his widowed tenants. Members of both these families left small bequests to the local poor and to the repair of the church.⁶²

These acts reveal how a particular 'charitable' gloss could be put on changes to church space that were a necessary accommodation to the realities of social change.⁶³ Of course, Farway's welfare system could not rely purely on acts of goodwill by the parishioners. In the 1560s the 'wardens of the poor' had organised voluntary collections for the settled, impotent poor of the parish. They also solicited promises of regular hospitality from some of the more prosperous inhabitants. By 1643 formal rating was funding a parish relief system still targeted at the settled poor. As is only to be expected, the rates raised were much higher – over £10 was disbursed in 1643 compared to 5s 4d in 1565 – but only six pensions and eight casual payments were made to the poor in this year.⁶⁴ A substantial minority of Farway's inhabitants subsisted at the margins of dependence, however. These would have included men such as Humphrey Salter, a cottager who farmed enough land to style himself 'husbandman' in the early seventeenth century, but who eked out his existence in hard years with

⁶¹ DRO 67A/PW1, fos.18^{r-v}; B.F. Cresswell, *Notes on the Churches of the Deanery of Honiton, Devon* (Exeter, 1912).

⁶² DRO 67A/PW1, fo.21^r; AWC 11/39; PCC 255 Fines (Will of William Pomeroy, 12 April 1647).

⁶³ Hindle, *State and Social Change*, p.81.

⁶⁴ DRO 67A/PW1 fos.3^r-4^r; BL Add. MS 21610, fo.5^r (Farway Poor Rate Accounts, 1643). The Perry family, who appear at the beginning of the sixteenth century, were recipients of no less than ten of these payments.

unlicensed ale-selling.⁶⁵ Like many parishes, Farway fought against attempts to add to its quota of 'settled' poor. At the county sessions in 1642 the overseers unsuccessfully attempted to prevent a widow who had been born in Farway from settling in the parish and receiving a pension.⁶⁶ Although the parish's population had certainly expanded since the early sixteenth century, perhaps stimulated by the relatively large areas of wastes, it is unlikely to have experienced the large influx of poor that took place in the clothmaking towns. The growth of the lace industry at neighbouring Honiton, however, led to an increase in the transient population around Farway. There is evidence from 1630 that the trouble and charge associated with the conveyance of 'Rogues and Vagrants etc.' from Honiton to their place of birth was causing tensions between the officers of nearby parishes.⁶⁷

Where does Foster fit in to this picture of a local economy? On the evidence of the rates of 1643, he probably ranked among the wealthiest quarter of the parish population, although his contribution was less than a third of Peter Prideaux's and less than half that of the most substantial yeoman household. Foster's benefice, valued at a mere £15 in 1535 and with only twenty-one acres of pastoral glebe land, nevertheless sustained an impressive parsonage house, with rooms and outbuildings geared to dairying and cider production by the late

⁶⁵ DRO Q/SO/1, p.93 (Midsummer 1594) [Salter licensed to erect a cottage]; Q/SO/2 (Epiphany 1606/7) [Salter prosecuted for unlicensed ale-selling]. The assessments of 1643 list only thirty-eight ratepayers but there were at least sixty-five households in 1674 (BL Add. MS 21610, fo.5').

⁶⁶ DRO Q/SO/8 (Michaelmas 1642). The poor rate accounts for the following year reveal that 15s was laid out to pursue this case (BL Add. MS 21610, fo.5').

⁶⁷ DRO Q/SO/6 (13 July 1630): William Pomeroy was questioned on why he or his tenant in Gittisham, near Honiton, 'should not beare an equall charge' in the conveyance of rogues and vagrants, as that faced by the constables of neighbouring Buckerell.

seventeenth century.⁶⁸ Both Foster and his predecessor were sufficiently engaged in the profitable farming of the church land to get into trouble with neighbouring parishioners over their diversion of the customary watercourse.⁶⁹ Foster also took steps to ensure that the entrepreneurial spirit of Farway's farmers redounded to his benefit. In 1632 he sued one of his parishioners, William Clapp, for tithe, a claim that had been building over the previous four years. Although the rectorial tithes appear to have been commuted to payments by this time, the incumbent might nevertheless derive a considerable income from the commercial farming of his parishioners, if he could overcome the legal barriers to demanding tithe on reclaimed land. The fleeces from Clapp's flock of 300 sheep, for example, would yield over £7 in tithe income, whilst the meat of his 300 lambs would net the vicar around £9.⁷⁰ Foster's determination to secure his tithe had landed him a more powerful adversary than Clapp, however, in the form of Sir Edmund Prideaux. It is to the fall-out produced by this antagonism that we now turn.

III.ii. Magistrate and Minister

In 1624 the social antagonisms and alignments in this small Devonshire village were brought before the eminent judges in Star Chamber.⁷¹ The problems began almost as soon as Foster set foot in the parish, for he was not Prideaux's chosen nominee and refused to come to any arrangement with the resident magistrate

⁶⁸ BL Add. MS 21610, fo.5^r; Farway Glebe Terriers, c.1600, 1680; Stoate (ed.), *Devon Hearth Tax Return: Lady Day 1674*, p.2 (five hearths). The two glebe terriers suggest there had been some expansion of the house, gardens and out-buildings but the amount of glebe land had largely remained stable. Foster was also wealthy enough to maintain more than one servant (STAC 8/146/12).

⁶⁹ PRO STAC 8/275/3: 'Scaddinge vs. Hoskins, Elliot and Floode'; BL Add. Ch. 13881, 13887 (Farway Manorial Court Rolls, 1632-34).

⁷⁰ DRO CC 6B/19; Hill, *Economic Problems*, p.106.

⁷¹ STAC 8/146/12.

over the payment of tithes. According to Foster's narrative of events, Prideaux had then instigated a campaign of vexatious litigation, assisted by the common informer Henry Sherring. In addition, Prideaux sought further to damage Foster's reputation among his parishioners by scoffing during his sermons and allegedly placing a lunatic in Foster's wife's pew. Although we have no record of Prideaux's version of the dispute, it is nevertheless possible from Foster's bill alone to reconstruct something of the dynamics by which it was driven. Of course we must remain sensitive to the rhetorical strategies and embellishments that are typical of this material. Foster and his counsel were doubtless aware of the widespread disquiet over the activities of informers around this time and made much of Sherring's 'lewde and seditious course of life' and his alleged malicious litigation against Foster and his fellow parishioners.⁷² Sherring was also said to have 'violently and forcible' entered Foster's parsonage armed with 'a longe Piked staffe' to serve him with a writ, an accusation of violent conduct we may reasonably take with a pinch of salt. There is, however, every reason to think that tensions between magistrate and minister were running particularly high at this time. The following analysis suggests how Foster's accusations and Prideaux's alleged slanders were shaped both by general principles of 'plausibility' and by the extant reputations of the individuals concerned.⁷³

As far as we can glean them from the available evidence, Prideaux's attacks on Foster employed the *topos* of the grasping, litigious cleric. Prideaux

⁷² For the growing complaints over the abuses of informers that eventually led to the Act of 1624 'for the ease of the Subject concerning the Informations uppon Penall Statutes' (21 Jas. I c.24) see M.W. Beresford, 'The Common Informer, the Penal Statutes and Economic Regulation', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 10:2 (1957), 221-37. For the earlier chequered history of reforms see D.R. Liddington, 'Parliament and the Enforcement of the Penal Statutes: The History of the Act 'In Restraint of Common Promoters' (18 Eliz. I c.5)', *Parliamentary History* 8 (1989), 309-28.

⁷³ For a summary of the methods used to make Star Chamber story-telling 'plausible and acceptable' see Cust, 'Honour and Politics', 61-63.

had tried to prevent Foster's appointment to the living by spreading rumours that he was a 'factious . . . and contentious person and one that would upon the leaste occasion sue molest and trouble the whole parrish'. Foster's reputation was also threatened by an illegal composition for charges of simony, forced upon him by Sherring. Foster of course vehemently denied these accusations in Star Chamber, claiming he was known to his patron and others 'to bee gentle and mild'. There is little concrete evidence to determine whether Prideaux's characterisation of Foster had any basis in fact. It may be that he was seeking to exploit the memory of Foster's predecessor, Nicholas Scadden, who was described by some of his parishioners as 'a man very troblesome amongst his neighbors by prosecutyng against them very many Suytes in lawe for small and tryfflinge causes'.⁷⁴ We do know, however, that Foster's previous benefice held the potential for conflict. His predecessor at Uffculme had failed to secure a more favourable agreement on tithes, a failure that apparently precipitated an irreversible souring of relations between the minister and his parishioners.⁷⁵ The vicarial tithes were particularly important in this parish as virtually all the profits from the substantial glebe lands went to the rector and patron – the prebend of Uffculme – or to his lay farmers. The struggle to fulfil ministerial duties in such a large parish with such a small income is suggested by fact that this living was held by four different vicars between 1609 and 1620.⁷⁶ Foster may have exacerbated pre-existent tensions between minister and flock by his active

⁷⁴ STAC 8/146/12; 8/275/3. Scadden had also sought to expand the material assets of the rectory (C 3/219/38: Thorne vs. Scaddinge).

⁷⁵ DRO 1926B/W/P 3/20 (Exemplification of pleading in the Court of Chancery, 21 October 1602); DRO 56/4/7/1 (Eighteenth-century copy of *Modus for Tithes*, 1604); DRO CC 178 (Complaints against the Clergy: Uffculme, December 1607).

⁷⁶ M. Tucker, 'Some Records of the Early Uffculme Vicars', in Wyatt and Stanes (eds.), *Uffculme: A Peculiar Parish*, p.122; WSRO D5/10/2/14 (Uffculme Glebe Terrier, 1638). In the seventeenth century the glebe lands were farmed out to the Holway family, who were resident landowners in the parish (DRO 1920A/PB1 (Lease of Glebe in Uffculme, 1694)).

supervision of their manners and morals. He was personally responsible for the thirteen presentments to the dean of Salisbury's visitation articles in 1619, no less than four of which related to illegitimate births.⁷⁷ Despite his self-fashioning as a gentle and committed pastor, moreover, Foster clearly had a taste for ecclesiastical governance. One year after his preferment to Farway, he returned to Uffculme in his capacity as an official of the Peculiar jurisdiction to carry out a visitation of the parish.⁷⁸ In 1625 he served as rural dean of Honiton, a position that made him responsible for the exercise of local discipline at visitations and gave him a supervisory role over the surrounding clergy.⁷⁹

Foster's characterisation of Prideaux deployed the rhetoric of corrupt magistracy, describing him as 'a man of a high Spirrit and of a covetous and gripinge disposition' who abused both his office and the law itself to 'his owne private gaine and profitt'. The accusation of trading in benefices was thrown back at Prideaux, who was charged with 'unlawfully Corruptly and Simonically' offering £300 to the patron to present his preferred nominee. This focus on Prideaux's greed, alongside condemnations of his 'wicked and ungodly' lust for revenge and his 'profane scoffinge and Tauntinge manner', were probably deliberately designed to undermine his existing reputation for piety. This had been nurtured through both practice and praise. Although Farway had a non-

⁷⁷ WSRO D5/29/20, no. 47 (Presentments of the Vicar and Churchwardens of Uffculme, 1619). Two of the couples had gone on to marry, suggesting the retrospective prosecution of pre-nuptial pregnancy that was often symptomatic of an increasing polarisation of social relations. Cf. Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p.133 and M. Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-century England', in K. von Greyerz (ed.), *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (London, 1984), pp.185-90.

⁷⁸ WSRO D20/2/1. The identification of 'Mr Thomas Foster Mr of Arts' with our Thomas Foster seems almost certain. No other Thomas Foster proceeded MA from Oxford, the closer University to Salisbury and Devon. Two proceeded from Cambridge in 1587 and 1597 but neither were clerics, a likely qualification for someone actually undertaking a visitation.

⁷⁹ Vage, 'Diocese of Exeter', p.531. For the duties of a rural dean see Sheils, 'Profits, Patronage and Pastoral Care', in O'Day and Heal (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English Church*, p.99.

preaching incumbent when Prideaux first settled in the parish, he had probably personally employed a preacher to teach his children and preach at the parish church on Sundays. In the early seventeenth century he had also heard sermons at Netherton by the deprived puritan rector Melancthon Jewell.⁸⁰ In 1621 the Calvinist divine John Prideaux dedicated an edition of his sermons to his kinsman and praised him for his ‘public esteem of the *Word* and its true *Professors*’. Sir Edmund’s ‘*Neighbours* and *Country*’ were said to be able to testify to his ‘exemplary practice’ in hearing the word preached with ‘meeknesse’.⁸¹

Reading between the lines of Foster’s narrative we can discern more specific attempts on both sides to undermine putatively false claims to ‘godliness’. On one side, Prideaux used the weapons of slander, litigation and public humiliation. He also undermined the content and style of Foster’s preaching by irreverently interrupting and deriding his sermons and by mocking his attempts to impose the highest ethical standards on his parishioners – ‘the high way to heaven’ – through the pulpit. Foster fought back through the pulpit itself, ‘zealously press[ing] a poynte of doctrine in several Tearmes’ so that Prideaux believed he had ‘spewed forth his spleen’ against him. Perhaps this too was a sermon against the covetousness of the rich, freighted towards a particular target, and thus something of a dry run for Foster’s sermon at Exeter. In any case, the nature and polemical focus of this conflict stands alongside the rest of the contextual fabric as part of the essential backdrop to this text.

⁸⁰ STAC 8/146/12; SP 14/10A/81; STAC 8/275/3. In this reply to Scadden’s bill, Henry and Christopher Hoskins noted that ‘a gentleman of very good estate and quality in the said Country of Devon’ brought a preacher down from London ‘unto his owne house . . . there to teach and instruct his Children and famyly and in the Saboth daies and other meete tymes to preach gods word in the said parishe’.

⁸¹ John Prideaux, *Eight Sermons* (1621), p.18.

IV 'GODS PLAINE TRUTH' IN THE PULPIT

The scourge of covetousnesse is a short but fascinating text. It represents an attempt to reconcile two potentially contradictory ideals: on the one hand, a vision of a commonwealth based on charity and brotherhood; on the other hand, a sense of the preacher's duty to deliver the sharpest of reproofs. In the course of the sermon, Foster identified the possibility of conflict between these two ideals, noting that

it is hard for a zealous Minister not to play the Satyr; yet, being now to take *Charities* part against *Covetousnesse* I shall be loath to breake *charities* head, in her defence; (only pardon the *Accent* of my voice, and zeale to the truth).⁸²

This 'zeale to the truth' led to Foster's censure of the Cathedral clergy; to his 'direction' of Bishop Hall; to his identification of the enemies of the commonwealth; and to his construction of the charitable ideal. In analysing each of these topics in the following section, attention will be paid to the interaction of audience, experience and intellectual inheritance. Although we cannot reconstruct the first of these in exhaustive detail, we can be almost certain that members of the county's leading gentry, including Peter Prideaux, who served as a JP in 1630, would have sat alongside the Cathedral hierarchy and the assize judges. It is also highly likely that the occasion attracted members of the city's governing Chamber, some of

⁸² Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.9.

whom were assiduous attendees at the Cathedral lectures and other sermons at St Peters.⁸³

The audience of course became potentially more diverse once the sermon went into print. In explaining his reasons for publication, Foster self-consciously eschewed the tacit commendation of the work implied by claiming ‘Importunity of friends’ had ‘prest this *Sermon* to the *Presse*’. Rather, he had gone on to the ‘*Publike stage* . . . To see whether I can finde more Charitable *Readers* of my *Well-meant Endeavours*, then I had some *Hearers*’. Thus the printed sermon was explicitly presented as a means for the author to restore his reputation and re-assert his interpretative authority over the ‘misprision’ of his auditors.⁸⁴ That even the printed version was less than peaceable, however, is suggested by the involvement of Michael Sparke in its printing and sale. Sparke had recently printed and distributed polemical puritan works by Henry Burton and William Prynne and was at this time a thorn in the side of the crown’s censors. He also both wrote and published works that focused on the ‘social’ issues of poverty and the sins of the rich, including Fitz-Geffry’s *Curse of corn-horders*.⁸⁵

⁸³ HMC, *Exeter*, pp.321-22; Nicholls, *The life and death of Mr. Ignatius Jurdain*, sig.a2^v (‘To the Reader’), p.7. For evidence of civic magistrates’ attendance at assize sermons see Gray, *The judges scripture*, sig.A2^v.

⁸⁴ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, sigs.A2^{r-v} (Epistle).

⁸⁵ PRO SP 16/119/58, 16/140/15, 16/141/17 16/142/22, 16/158/49. Cf. Anon., *Greevous grones for the poore. Done by a well-willer, who wisheth, that the poore of England might be so provided for, as none shall neede to go a begging within this realme* (1621) [printed by Michael Sparke]; Michael Sparke, *The poore orphans court, or Orphans cry. By M.S. Being a wel-wisher for a speedy helpe of their misery, and an eye-witnesse of their present calamitie* (1636).

IV.i. Confronting the Clergy

Whilst the transition from preached to printed text in this case certainly involved some judicious editing, the published sermon nevertheless used wordplay and allusions to sustain part of its polemical agenda. In the pulpit, Foster had prefaced his attacks on the ‘Cathedrall men’ with an anecdote about a clergyman – a ‘*Fisher of men*’ – who cared only for preferment and nothing for preaching and the cure of souls. His alleged comment that ‘the Cannons made not noyse, but it was the muskateers that made reporte’ had a double meaning in the context of an assize sermon: As a mere ‘muskateer’ or parochial minister, Foster could nevertheless turn the tables on his ecclesiastical superiors with the metaphorical ‘report’ of explosive preaching. The public context also meant this preaching acted as a literal ‘report’ to the secular magistrates of the canons’ negligence and avarice. The specific reference to the Cathedral clergy is replaced in the printed text with an enigmatic appeal to the individual conscience: ‘[l]et them that be guilty, make the *Application*’. But the definition of negligence among the clergy as a failure to ‘communicate Spirtiual Food to the Soules of the people’ pointed to a staple criticism in (increasingly bitter) attacks on cathedral clergy in general.⁸⁶ The clearest allusion to this target is found when negligent clergy are described as men who ‘love the *Chaire*, better then the *Pulpit*’. The translation of this patristic phrase into its original Latin – ‘*Currant ad Cathedram, non ad curam*’ – was surely an intentional attempt to secure an oblique echo of ‘Cathedral’ in the printed text. It also reveals another aspect to Foster’s overall

⁸⁶ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.21-22. Cf., for example, Henry Burton, *For God, and the King. The summe of two sermons preached on the fifth of November last in St. Matthews Friday-Streete* ([Amsterdam], 1636), p.160.

critique: The love for the 'Chair' – the seat of justice – was symptomatic of a clerical elite '[m]ore *Secular*, than *Ecclesiasticall*; very *Demasses*, indeed'.⁸⁷

No great psychological insight is required to recognise this criticism as in part an attempt by the author to come to terms with his own limited authority over his fellow man. Even if personal envy motivated this attack, however, its formulation in the pulpit made it public property and therefore a resource in the construction of rival claims to authority. The censure of clerical involvement in secular affairs pointed particularly at higher clergy such as Thomas Clifford, who had a prominent position on the county bench.⁸⁸ More controversially, this criticism may have been understood by both the canons and the civic magistrates in Foster's audience as an implicit challenge to the Cathedral chapter's jurisdictional privileges in the city. At the very least, the sermon reminded magistrates such as Ignatius Jorden of the moralised discourses through which the city's own jurisdictional claims could be formulated. The first discourse depended on a revised version of the three estates structure, which envisaged separate duties as 'common-wealths men' for the magistrate, minister and private man. The second discourse drew on the stereotypical imagery of the court as a place of fawning flattery, a polemic that had enjoyed particular buoyancy during the 1620s. The fate of ambitious politician-clerics in the diocese was suggested by the evocative example of Cardinal Wolsey, 'who being swollen so bigge by

⁸⁷ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.22. Foster depended on the clerics in his audience knowing the signification of 'Demas', a 'fellowlabourer' (Philemon verse 24) with the Apostle Paul, who forsook him 'having loved this present world' too much (2.Timothy 4:10).

⁸⁸ For further condemnations of clergy exercising temporal jurisdiction see Gardiner (ed.), *Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission*, pp.253-59 [Dr Hooke of Nettleham in 1631] and *CSPD 1631-3*, p.334 [Richard Spinks at Cambridge in 1632]. For the general context of increased clerical involvement in temporal affairs see Foster, 'The Clerical Estate Revitalised', in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, pp.139-60.

the blasts of Promotion . . . suddenly burst, and vented forth the Wind of all former favours'.⁸⁹

IV.ii. Joseph Hall and the Construction of 'Reputation'

Despite their being aimed specifically at the Cathedral canons, several of the foregoing criticisms would have touched on the bishop himself. Joseph Hall, like many members of the Caroline episcopacy, had sat on the county bench and was keen to defend the Cathedral's privileges against encroachments by the civic magistrates. He had also taken on a chaplain, in the form of Martin Nansogg, who embodied the ambitious opportunism that Foster condemned. Although Hall had sought to constrain the canons' exploitation of their preferments, he may have been embarrassed by the highlighting of their pastoral negligence, especially as one of the canons was his own son. Apart from his need to maintain a reputation as a moderate who would not tolerate divisive preaching, therefore, Hall had other reasons to bring Foster before his Audience Court and suspend him from his duties.

At first sight, however, the sermon offers little other than adulation of the bishop himself. Foster praised Hall – 'the *Hounourable Common-wealths* man of our Israel' – for his '*Indefatigable Labors* in the word and Doctrine, learnedly and liberally communicated to the whole Church, from *Presse* and *Pulpit*'. He then defended the bishop against his enemies – '[d]unghill-Cockes,

⁸⁹ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.6, 18-22. Cf. Scott, *Belgicke pismire*, p.6, where negligent ministers are described as 'Wolves in sheepes cloathing' who 'become Courtiers, and leave the care of the Church to others'. For the apotheosis of criticism of the court in the 1620s see K. Sharpe, 'Crown, Parliament and Locality: Government and Communication in Early Stuart England' in Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England: Essays and Studies* (London, 1989), pp.88-93.

that cannot distinguish between a *Barly-corne*, and a Jewell' – comparing them to the frogs in Aesop's fable, who were 'never pleased with their present *Governour*: when they had a *Storke*, he was too stirring; when they had a *Stocke*, hee was too still'. This analogy helped to identify Hall's critics as those who accused him of being too lenient ('too still') on puritan non-conformity. Like the Catholics at Trent who declared they would love bishop Jewel '*si non esses Zwinglianus*', these critics seemed to perversely insist they would love bishop Hall 'if hee were not so good as he is'.⁹⁰

This passage gives every appearance of confirming Hall's self-image as a moderate cleric upholding the traditions of the Elizabethan church, with the intention of countering the rumours circulating to the contrary in his diocese. On one level this is almost certainly the case. But Foster provides us with the key to unlocking a second level of meaning, when he notes only two pages earlier in relation to the judges, that by 'telling men what they are, we represent to them what they should be'. Although Hall is not addressed directly, Foster was nevertheless aware of his presence in the audience and of the understanding he would have of this 'commandative' aspect of praise.⁹¹ The comparison of Hall with Jewel is particularly ambiguous, since the latter had recently been marshalled as an ally by Henry Burton, in his critique of Hall's views on the church of Rome.⁹² Foster's message in this context may thus be translated as an appeal to the bishop not to produce any further works of doctrine which appeared

⁹⁰ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.20-21. For the use of fables to comment on specific political situations see A. Patterson, 'Fables of Power', in K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker (eds.), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1987), pp.295-96.

⁹¹ See above, ch.2, p.144.

⁹² Speaking before High Commission, Burton claimed that those 'who endeavour to prove the Church of Rome to be a true visible church' spoke 'contrary to Bishop Jewel's *Apology*'. He also included Jewel among the 'learned champions of [God's] truth' in *Truth's Triumph over Trent* (PRO SP 16/142/40; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p.187).

to countenance supposedly 'new' ideas and to recognise that the true enemies to his image of 'moderation' were not the likes of Burton but the unprincipled rumour-mongers in his own diocese. In this sense, Foster's praise has more in common with the 'directive' approach of an Ignatius Jorden than with the 'supportive' approach of a John Bury. Foster was certainly not suggesting that Hall abandon public displays of ecclesiastical authority: he was to continue to 'provide for the Common good of the Church, both in *Doctrine* and *Discipline*'. But the clear implication is that the 'Pastoral staffe' of discipline should not only be applied to the adherent of '*Schisme* and *Faction*' but also to the cunning, envious malcontent who tried to challenge an extant policy of persuasion and compromise. Moreover, 'faction' is never explicitly identified with 'puritanism'. Indeed, it is quite possible that Foster's contention that schism had begun to be 'too sawcie and unruly' referred to the increasing confidence of the Arminian Baptist community in the area.⁹³

IV.iii. Causes of 'Common Woe'

In *The scourge of covetousnesse*, Foster explicitly aligned himself with an older tradition of socio-political criticism, epitomised in his appropriation of More's image of the 'conspiracy of the rich'. Like the mid-Tudor reform tracts, Foster's definition of covetous focuses on the hoarding and enlargement of *existing* riches – 'Tis a rare thing to see a rich man religious' – but says nothing about how the mere *desire* for riches might make men err from faith. Foster also adopted the traditional guise of 'an ominous prophet' in his condemnation of the various

⁹³ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.20; Gowers, 'Puritanism in the County of Devon', p.194; H.B. Case, *The History of the Baptist Church in Tiverton, 1607 to 1907* (London, 1907), pp.5-6.

forms of avarice ('Woe to you *ingrossers, covetous*'). Furthermore, his imagery of the Commonwealth's decay works within the familiar paradigm of the maldistribution of resources: Covetous men had '*Monopoliz'd* the Common Treasure into their private hands' so that 'though the Kingdome may have good *Limmes*, yet it will have but empty *Vines*'.⁹⁴

Closer inspection of the sermon, however, reveals a hybrid critique that reflects a changing discursive and economic environment as well as the particular priorities of the preacher. This is most apparent in Foster's consideration of the effects of covetousness. While the Tudor gospellers focused on the manifestations of covetousness in the form of agrarian oppression, Foster's greatest agitation is reserved for 'Pride and Selfe-love . . . the Daughter of Prosperity'. Thus the idolatry of riches infected the individual conscience so that men became 'ravisht with the very sight of [their earthly things], as *Narcissus* with the sight of his supposed-selfe'. The ultimate effect of allowing '*Insinuating, Sucking* selfe-lovers' to flourish was, of course, the withering of the 'publicke state' but there is little exploration of the increasing polarisation of wealth that would lead to this decay. In contrast to Fitz-Geffry, who adapted the structures of Tudor complaint to portray the oppression of poor wage-earners by large corn farmers, Foster largely avoided using the piteous state of the poor *en masse* as an exhortatory strategy. Where he did depict an oppressive relationship in detail, the parties were a single '*Usurious Creditor*' and his '*penurious Debtor*'. The way for any 'private man' to become 'a good *Common-wealths* man' was principally to avoid this sin of usury: 'For a *Gentleman* to bee an

⁹⁴ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.5, 8, 12.

Usurer, is most ungenerous; for a *Citizen*, most uncivill; for a *Minister*, most unclarkely, for any man – most unchristianlike'.⁹⁵

The scourge of covetousnesse, like many clerical works at this time, gives voice to the growing chorus of contending interpretations of economic experience. The doctrine of stewardship was assailed, Foster observed, by the 'common Proverbe – *shall I not doe with mine owne as I will*', which he attacked as a misreading of Scripture. Foster also thought little of proverbial wisdom which stated, once 'Riches are conferr'd upon a man', that '*He is a man made*'. The moral, of course, was that man was made by God and not by riches. A note of defensiveness creeps into Foster's insistence that covetous men must necessarily err from the path of truth: 'I dare make it part of my Faith (yet avouch my selfe no *Hereticke*) That a Covetous man hath no true Faith'.⁹⁶ This testifies to the increasing difficulty faced by traditional moralists in demanding that their auditors form a unitary identity out of their 'Christian' and 'worldly' selves.⁹⁷ Foster confronted this challenge with relish, however. The thirteen 'fast friends to *covetousnesse*' that he listed towards the beginning of the sermon embraced middlemen (engrossers, regrators); entrepreneurs and opportunists (politicians, projectors, promoters [informers]); and potential oppressors (depopulators, extortioners, usurers, Church-robbers). By heaping up these examples of covetousness Foster almost guaranteed that the members of his audience would recognise themselves somewhere, as long as they 'submit[ed] to the ingenuous censure of the Text'. If he appeared to 'play the Satyr' and be overly severe in his censure, this was only because of the 'abominable

⁹⁵ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.3, 6, 11, 23-24.

⁹⁶ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.3, 5.

⁹⁷ See above, ch.1, p.86.

Covetousnesse, cold Charity, and abounding iniquity' of the times. Aware that the line between 'thrift' and covetousness was becoming increasingly blurred in the judgement of the individual conscience, Foster urged his audience to err on the side of caution: 'Gods Saints must not onely be voyd of the fact of *Covetousnesse*, but of the *Fame*'.⁹⁸ This warning also served to remind the auditors that whilst a part of popular discourse might appear to endorse aspects of acquisitive individualism, good credit could easily be destroyed by a reputation for greed or avarice. Foster even showed how the rhyming proclivities of proverbial wisdom might be used to support his assault on possessive individualism: 'The Covetous mans object', he declared, 'is not Christs Crosse, but the worlds Drosse'.⁹⁹

The sermon is therefore concerned, at least in part, with addressing its audience as 'private' men, entangled in relationships of credit and exploiting various opportunities for profit.¹⁰⁰ Because of its occasion and audience, however, it also deals explicitly with the duties of 'public men'. One description of the 'commonwealth' duties of the magistrate focuses on the familiar theme of the negligence of 'our *inferiour Officers*', who passed by 'with little or no regard' a country '*robb'd* by racking *Landlords*, wounded by *Ingrossing* and *Transporting* Marchants, *Halfe-dead* by *Devouring* Usurers'. Both judges and justices were here urged to deal personally with these dangers to the commonwealth. Foster would no doubt have approved of the local justices halting shipments to Bristol, even though the privy council would overturn this

⁹⁸ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.6, 8-9.

⁹⁹ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.2, 11.

¹⁰⁰ For the complexity of credit transactions in Exeter's economy by the early 1630s and evidence that the rates of litigation to recover debts 'were not very strongly related to the movement of grain prices' see Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.226.

policy only a few months after his sermon.¹⁰¹ There are hints elsewhere, however, that Foster had not entirely forgotten his experience at the hands of a local magistrate and was keen to draw attention to potential failings and corruption that might remain on the county bench.

This agenda is implied in Foster's acknowledgement of the 'comfortable experience' he had enjoyed with one of the Westminster judges in his case against Sherring and Prideaux. By describing this case as a 'publike cause' and praising the judge's 'famous Act of Justice' against Sherring, Foster simultaneously registered the failure of the *local* justices to cut off this canker on the body politic.¹⁰² The suggestion that self-interest had contaminated aspects of the nation's public life appears most starkly in the passages that elaborate Foster's characterisation of the commonwealth as a 'conspiracy of the rich'. Thus too many 'both publike and private persons' had become 'extreame lovers of themselves'. An appropriate comparison could be found in Vespasian's empire, in which many were advanced to promotion 'that were most noted for Covetousnesse'. In this connection, '*Godly policy*' is called upon to 'still keepe centinell; that neyther *Selfe-wisedome*, nor *Privacy*, doe encroach upon the *publike*.' More specifically, engrossers and others should be 'wrung and prest, to yeeld out their *Ill-gotten-Goods* for the publike-good'. This would go some way towards addressing the fact that until now, '*Deprav'd Policy* and *Corruption* . . . *private Ingrossing* and *Usury*, in Citie and Country' had been 'suffered to *play the Game*'.

¹⁰¹ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.20; *APC 1630-31*, p.125.

¹⁰² Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.19. There is no independent record of a fine being imposed on Sherring in Star Chamber but the 'Act of Justice' may refer to Sherring no longer being permitted to act as a common informer.

The implication of this passage is that covetousness had been able to thrive due to the connivance of the magistrate. The image of engrossing was particularly pertinent to a time of dearth and it appears again twice: first in connection with the merchant, as noted above, and secondly in Foster's condemnation of those who 'greedily ingrosse' or 'hide and hord those things, which God *hath* made *Common*'.¹⁰³ Foster thereby hinted that local magistrates – some perhaps with large stocks of corn of their own – were conspiring with merchant-farmers in the predominantly arable areas of the county to withhold corn from the open market. However many orders the magistrates issued for the suppression of maltsters or alehouses, Foster implied, they could not deny their own complicity in the current state of affairs. The repentance necessary to avert God's 'just visitation and vengeance' was required not, as Fitz-Geffry had suggested, among the suffering poor, but among the rich 'selfe-lovers' themselves.¹⁰⁴ The attack on engrossing may also have related more specifically to Foster's experience, as entrepreneurial farmers in his parish began to increase the amount of land put under the plough. In this way we can see how Foster's defence of commonwealth ideals is entwined with an awareness of his own interests: given that his glebe land was given over to pasture, he was likely to have been dependent on the supply of corn from tithes, perhaps supplemented with purchases in the open market. Indeed, the imagery of engrossing and hoarding echoes more generally the complaints against the withholding of tithes that had become – through their public articulation in Star Chamber – a defining feature of Foster's career.

¹⁰³ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.11-12. For the merchant image see above, p.271.

¹⁰⁴ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.17.

IV.iv: The Charitable Ideal

Despite his criticism of clerical avarice, Foster insisted that in their capacity as private men, ministers 'have reason to have a provident care of our *Temporall* estates, as other men: wee are not now maintain'd by *Miracle*'. In a broader sense, the injunction of his scriptural text did not require an abnegation of private property but rather that one eye be kept always on the ideal of the common good. It was this ideal that was the particular object of charitable acts and offices.¹⁰⁵ Foster's art of persuasion therefore eschewed emotive imagery designed to elicit pity for the poor, in favour of intellectual proofs and arguments. He began by noting, with reference to Beza's commentary on Corinthians 1 13:13, that as 'Faith is necessarie to *Justification* . . . So are workes of *Charity* to *Sanctification*'. The proof that charity is a '*Good Companion*' is found in the primitive church. This '*Community of Goods* would well stand with Christianity', Foster averred, 'if the *Commonweale* were well *Constitute*: and the people (like those *Converts*) Combined by the Spirit of Charity'. In order to understand what was meant by the phrase 'community of goods', Foster insisted that 'we must a little mixe *Philosophy* and *Divinity*'. Where Erasmus and More had seen the primitive church reflected most clearly in Plato's *Republic*, however, Foster described this philosopher's community as 'unpious, absurd, & ridiculous' and, naturally, tending towards 'an *Anabaptisciall Anarchy*'. Instead he finds a vision agreeable with the '*Morall Law* of God' in Aristotle's 'community of use', which 'gives every man his owne, in point of *Propriety*; and

¹⁰⁵ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.13, 22.

requires this *Duty* . . . that the *Use of our Goods* should be, to help our neighbours in necessity'.¹⁰⁶

This adaptation of earlier humanist thought is testament to the influence of a discourse of 'order' that emerged in the wake of the mid-sixteenth-century rebellions and was strengthened in response to the troubled economic and religious climate in preceding years.¹⁰⁷ It can also be argued, however, that Foster's idealisation of the place of charity reveals a certain ambivalence in his conceptualisation of the commonwealth. On the one hand, as we have seen, a form of magisterial power deriving from the centre was perceived as being capable of rooting out the corruption and self-interest that prevented the formation of bonds of affection. On the other hand, these bonds alone were the '*Cement, that can joyne Hearts and Soules, and make men Unanimous, to have but one soule in a Multitude of Bodies. And from this Conjunction must needs grow a Community: from the unity of Affections, a Community of Charitable Actions*'. In this image, therefore, the 'sinews' of the commonwealth were not its laws and policies or the vigour of its magistrates, but the strong personal bonds between men, formed through the face to face relationship of charity. Such a community would be able to enforce the moral '*Right of charity, that belongs to the common good*' as successfully as the legal '*Right of propriety, that appertains to the Private Owner*'. This tension between the principles of *civitas* and *societas* informs much of the socio-political discourse in this period.¹⁰⁸

In Foster's text an effort is made to harmonise these principles through the image of a Christian brotherhood with a clear hierarchical structure, bound

¹⁰⁶ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.14-16. For Erasmus' and More's view of Plato's *Republic* see above, ch.1, p.108.

¹⁰⁷ Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp.201-02.

¹⁰⁸ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.14-15.

together through law. 'Remember, you are one anothers Members, knit together by the sinewes of *policy*, to one *Monarchical Head*; let it be your care, to study the welfare of *Him*, and one another'. This image is undermined, however, by an alternative depiction of the charitable ideal, drawn from the example of the Dutch City States. '[L]et the *United Provinces* learne us to unite our hearts', Foster proclaimed:

They finding any fallen into decay (Specially by designment of *Divine providence*) doe voluntarily Contribute towards their Necessities: and that by a kinde of *Silent and close Beneficence*; That neither themselves, who give, may doe it in *Ostentation*; nor they, who receive, may feare exprobaton. A pious policy and worthy imitation.¹⁰⁹

By the time Foster preached this sermon, such halcyon descriptions of Dutch charity may have been familiar to his literate audience. This passage paraphrased part of Thomas Scott's *Belgicke pismire*, which went through four editions between 1622 and 1624.¹¹⁰ Foster appears to be more concerned than Scott, however, to make clear to his audience that this model requires *voluntary* relief of the poor. Scott wrote of men being moved by 'to contribute towards their necessities, by a kind of silent and close *compulsion*'. Foster added the word 'voluntary' and substituted 'beneficence' for 'compulsion'. Perhaps this testifies to a greater ambivalence towards increasingly widespread compulsory rating or perhaps to an awareness that a time of distress required heightened surveillance of those on the margins of subsistence. In any case, it is likely that these two authors had similar targets in mind. Just as Scott had urged the citizens of his

¹⁰⁹ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, pp.22, 25.

¹¹⁰ Scott, *Belgicke pismire*, pp.75-76.

native Norwich to pay heed to the example of the industrious Dutch, so Foster almost certainly included this description in order to spur the godly members of Exeter's governing Chamber into charitable action. Perhaps the message was intended to resonate particularly with Ignatius Jorden, whose charity towards the 'shamefaced' poor during the plague five years previously was to be lauded after his death.¹¹¹

By presenting this model of urban practice as the only policy 'worthy [of] imitation' at this time, however, Foster was treading on dangerous political ground. His comments might be read as an indirect criticism of a central government policy that urged the realisation of the charitable imperative through paternalistic hospitality in the countryside. Latent in the numerous proclamations and conciliar orders to enforce gentry residence in the provinces was the idealisation of the 'open' country house as an emollient for social tensions.¹¹² This had little in common with Foster's narrative of his own experience and that of his parishioners, in which the resident magistrate was characterised as the source of disruption and disquiet amongst his neighbours. Foster's implicit rejection of magisterial hospitality in favour of corporate action co-ordinating voluntary charity on behalf of the 'shamefaced' poor was also an implied endorsement of the collective action taken by his fellow yeomen to preserve the sense of social harmony in a changing village.

¹¹¹ Nicholls, *The life and death of Mr. Ignatius Jurdain*, pp.14-15 (see above, p.247). For the central place of the civic corporation more generally in the administration of formal rating and private bequests see MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.107-16; C.S. Evans, 'An Echo of the Multitude': The Intersection of Governmental and Private Property Initiatives in Early Modern Exeter', *Albion* 32:3 (Autumn 2000), 408-28. Evans also cites a Chamber directive in 1589 that the mayor and justices were to be 'informed of sick and incapable poor' within the city (414).

¹¹² F. Heal, 'The Crown, The Gentry and London: The Enforcement of Proclamation, 1596-1640', in C. Cross, D. Loades and J.J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Law and Government under the Tudors* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.221-25; Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, p.9.

An appraisal of the myriad contextual dimensions of this text, combined with close attention to its rhetorical strategies, reveals possible layers of meaning that are not immediately apparent. In *The scourge of covetousnesse* Foster offered an interpretation of economic change that drew on the traditional principles of the moral economy, but he also embellished these in connection with ongoing developments and in response to aspects of his specific experience. More significantly, perhaps, the sermon represents an active intervention in the formulation of the reputation of powerful figures, and in the power struggles both within and between the ecclesiastical and civil hierarchies. An analysis of authorial motivation can only ever be speculative, but there is enough evidence to suggest that Foster's role as 'zealous minister' was formed out of hybrid influences, not the least of which was his own frustrated ambition. Foster was no 'alienated intellectual' or hero of a puritan revolution, nor did he construct himself explicitly as an advocate for the poor. His one surviving sermon is nevertheless both influenced by, and an elaboration of, a variety of discourses that challenged the growth of possessive individualism and the values and practices of the governing classes.

Central to Foster's ability to pursue the various forms of criticism we have examined here was a preaching style in which the orator self-consciously alienated himself from part of his audience. Foster is explicit in his claim that his purpose is to '*Reforme* the Will' and that therefore he would preach 'rather to profit, than to please', no matter how powerful his audience.¹¹³ Although only

¹¹³ Foster, *The scourge of covetousnesse*, p.2.

the more radical ministers explicitly advocated a highly divisive form of preaching, a commitment to this 'zealous' style was closely linked to the puritan model of a preaching ministry that was 'dominant and even normative . . . in the post-Reformation Church of England'. The alternative pastoral model that began to emerge in the late sixteenth century, however, stressed the importance of an attitude of peace and decency in the pulpit, since 'if a Minister will profit his auditors, he must be well thought of by them'.¹¹⁴

This stereotype gained increasing currency in the 1620s and 1630s. More specifically, it appears to have been used by another preacher in Exeter Cathedral to attack Foster directly. John Bury's visitation sermon, like many texts self-avowedly advocating 'moderation', was concerned to distinguish between the 'holy art of *pleasing*' and 'flattery, and time-serving'. It was possible to cultivate the former, Bury claimed, without becoming 'a politique *Proteus*, a time serving *Dissembler*'. A 'pleasing' preacher was 'covetous of nothing but men, and *fishing* for nothing but *soules*'. Not only did Bury explicitly confront Foster's imagery here, he also turned Foster's accusations of self-interest back on the zealous preacher: 'you that *please* your selves too much in the *neglect* of pleasing others . . . run too much on the other hand . . . and breake Christs peace'. He reinforced this critique with an alternative explanation of dearth, that deflected attention away from the corruptions of magistrates and the avarice of rich farmers: 'Who hath brought this dearth of Corne, Mault, &c? I

¹¹⁴ Patrick Collinson, 'The Pastoral Ministry in Post-Reformation England', p.186; 'The summe and substance of a treatise concerning the sabbath' (Bodl. Rawl MS D. 1346). I owe this reference to Arnold Hunt.

beleeve the *hue and crie* would apprehend the *drunken* Epicure upon strong suspicion'.¹¹⁵

Of course, Foster did not exactly fit the stereotype of a Boanerges preaching hell-fire and brimstone, as his positive exhortations to charity bear witness. Nor was his style, before this learned audience at least, free of 'pleasing' elements, such as the use of proverbs, rhymes and the liberal quotation of passages in Latin and Greek.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, his overall stance was that of the modern-day prophet, surveying the 'abhonminable Covetousnesse' all around him and thereby (theoretically, at least) deflecting attention away from his own pride and flaws. The historiographical debate over confrontational preaching in this vein has focused largely on its impact in the parishes. It is becoming increasingly clear that few ministers conformed wholly either to the model of 'pastor' or to that of 'preacher'. Nevertheless, it is apparent that a less vehement attachment in the pulpit to the harsh logic of predestination *could* foster a more tolerant attitude towards ordinary parishioners.¹¹⁷ What is rarely touched upon, however, is the extent to which this style of preaching might also mean turning a blind eye to the iniquities of the rich, on such prestigious occasions as the assizes or bishop's visitation. This is not as straightforward as it might first appear. A recurring theme in this thesis, after all, is the ambivalence of apparently peaceable compliment and praise. It might be more accurate to say that preachers had to develop subtler means of criticising and directing their auditors, or at least deploy strategies that minimised the risk of censure by the authorities. Our final

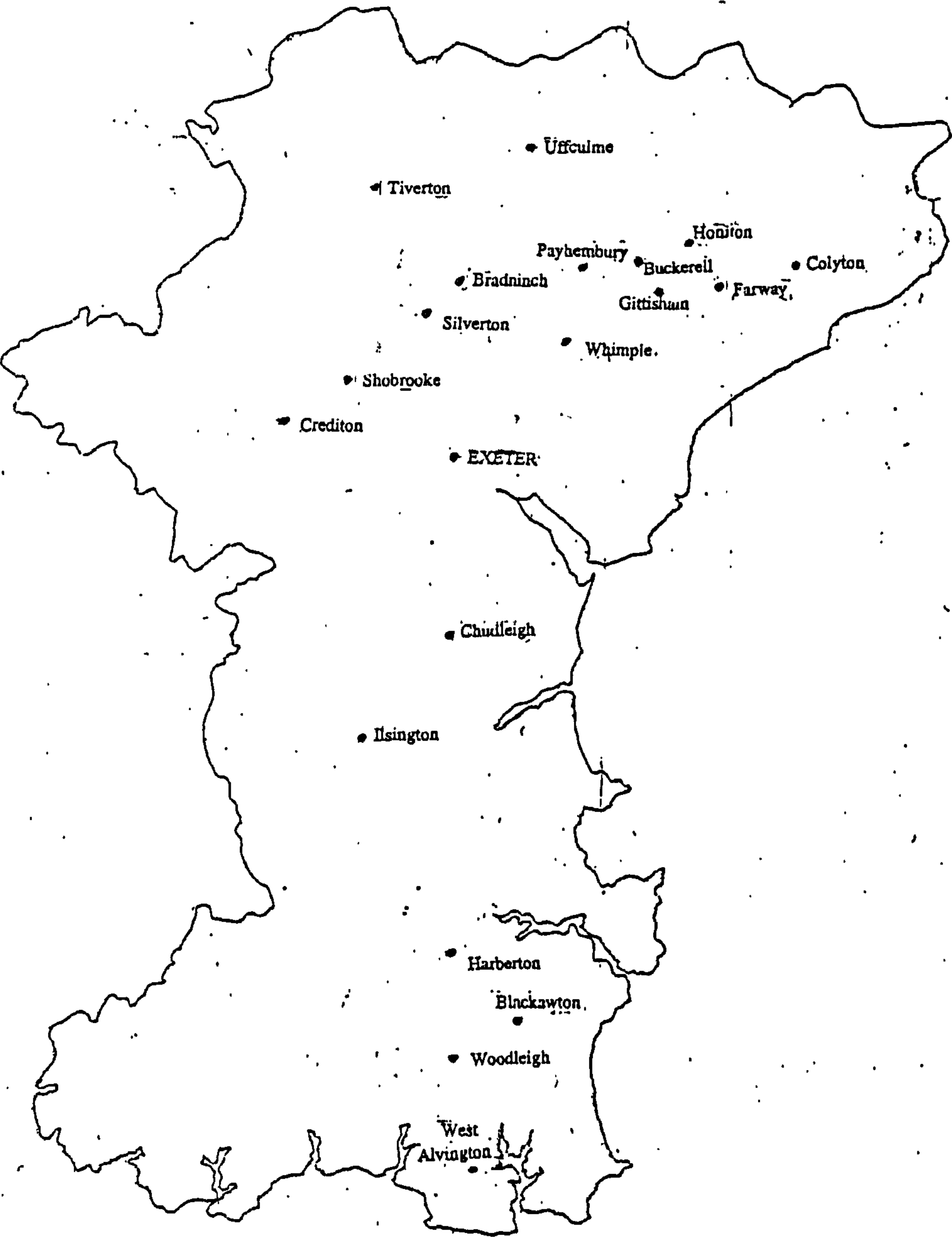
¹¹⁵ Bury, *The moderate Christian*, pp.12-13, 15, 21. Cf. John Downname's blaming of dearth on drunkards, cited in Walter and Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order', 28-29.

¹¹⁶ For puritan criticism of this tendency among preachers see Chaderton, *An excellent and godly sermon*, sigs.F6^v-7^r.

¹¹⁷ Haigh, 'The Taming of Reformation'.

case study provides an intriguing example of this, within the context of a region that had undergone traumatic agrarian change.

Map 2: East and South Devon, showing places mentioned in the text



CHAPTER FIVE

'Pernicious and perilous plots and projects': Joseph Benthams and the Fracturing of Communities in Early Stuart Northamptonshire

Our final case study is situated in the Midlands, a region in which both economic and religious innovation came in for particularly heavy criticism.¹ The central figure in this story, Joseph Benthams (1593/4-1671), was one of the principal exponents of moderate puritanism in early Stuart Northamptonshire and a vociferous champion of the moral economy. Although born outside the county, Benthams served the Northamptonshire parishes of Weekley for nearly fourteen years and Broughton for over eleven years.² He was sequestered by parliamentary commission in 1643 but returned to Broughton in 1660 as a committed supporter of, and clerical propagandist for, the restored Stuart regime.³ Before the disruption of civil war, Benthams's patron was Edward, first Baron Montagu of Boughton (1562-1644), whose godly activism and economic

¹ For criticism of economic change by preachers in the Midlands see above, ch.1, pp.72, 98; ch.2, pp.130, 162. For reactions to religious developments in the 1630s see Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*, ch.11 and J. Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', esp. chs.3-6. See also Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities', pp.93-113. For the early history of puritanism in the diocese see W. J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610* (NRS 30, Northampton, 1979).

² H. I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (16 vols., Northampton, 1938-52), I, p.73. Benthams may have been the grandson of Thomas Benthams, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1560-78) (cf. <http://bibliofile.mc.duke.edu/gww/geneology/TB-MB.html>). For an analysis of Thomas Benthams's career see R. O'Day, 'Thomas Benthams: A Case Study of the Problems of the Early Elizabethan Episcopate', *JEH* 23 (1972), 137-59. For the location of Weekley, Broughton and other places mentioned in this chapter, see Map 3, p.338.

³ Bridges, II, p.86; Walker, *Sufferings*, pp.205-06. After his sequestration Benthams became curate of Lower Winchendon (Bucks.). During his second incumbency of Broughton he published two tracts in defence of divine right and conformity. The first, *The right of kings by Scripture, or, A collection of some Scriptures shewing kings to be of God also* (1661), also included 'An essay for orderly hearing' and 'A defence of Psalm-singing'. The second was entitled *A dissuasive from error much increased: A perswasive to order much decayed* (1669).

conservatism mirrored that of his minister.⁴ Bentham had graduated MA from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1618 and this education helped secure his membership of the combination lecture at Kettering. The sermons he preached here formed the basis for his two printed treatises *The societie of the saints* (1630) and *The Christian conflict* (1635).⁵ As Peter Lake has made clear, these texts, like other sermons at the Kettering lecture, were intended both to define and strengthen the communal identity of the elect and to defend the truly godly against the slanders of their enemies.⁶

In contrast to the previous case studies, which have ranged freely across the relevant texts, the following discussion employs a necessarily selective approach to these treatises. It focuses on Bentham's handling of two themes: the proper forms of charity and the twin evils of enclosure and engrossing. The first of these topics surfaces at various points in the two texts. The godly audience was reminded that unmercifulness towards the poor was 'one quality, badge, and character of mis-beleeving miscreants', the 'brutish goats' who would suffer 'dolefull, and never enough deplored doome' at the Day of Judgement. The forms that this charity should take varied from relatively indiscriminate hospitality to the surveillance of the poor in their homes and also included the

⁴ E. Cope, *The Life of a Public Man: Edward, First Baron Montagu of Boughton 1562-1644* (The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1981). For Bentham's relationship with his patron see NRO Montagu MS 186. This Manuscript 'Life of Montagu' is untitled and originally unpaginated although page numbers have been added and will be used throughout this chapter.

⁵ Joseph Bentham, *The Christian conflict: A treatise, shewing the difficulties and duties of this conflict, with the armour, and speciall graces to be exercised by Christian souldiers. Particularly applied to magistrates, ministers, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants. The case of usury and depopulation, and the errours of antinomists occasionally also discussed. Preached in the lecture of Kettering in the county of Northampton, and with some enlargement published* (1635); Bentham, *The societie of the saints* (1636 edn.).

⁶ P. Lake, 'A Charitable Christian Hatred': The Godly and their Enemies in the 1630s', in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (1996), pp.144-83. Lake considers these two treatises of Bentham's in tandem with two works by Robert Bolton: *Some general directions for a comfortable walking with God* (1626) and *Instructions for a right comforting afflicted consciences* (1635).

alms that accompanied the duty of fasting. The charitable imperative was particularly pressing at moments of affliction, when ‘You rich men of the world are . . . tempted to despise and oppresse your poor brethren . . . to treade upon the poore’. Thus part of *The Christian conflict* is based on a sermon preached in February 1632, which addressed itself to ‘the present occasion’ of ‘pinching dearth’.⁷

The second theme was touched upon in *The societie of the saints* but received a full exposition only in the section of *The Christian conflict* ‘Against depopulators and inclosers’. In order to confute the ‘deceitfull deludings’ or ‘pernicious and perilous plots and projects’ of the ‘dreadfull desolating depopulators’, Bentham employed a mixture of rational argument, emotive imagery and alarming prophecy. The most striking passage in this section on depopulators is a catalogue of twelve landowners – identified only by their initials – who had suffered the ‘keene and cutting judgements of God’ for their sins. As John Walter has pointed out, this kind of pulpit-based naming and shaming is particularly indicative of ‘the continued moralization of pronouncements on the politics of land and food’.⁸ Throughout the texts, the authority of the church fathers, tales from indigenous chronicles and even the personal testimony of Bentham’s neighbours were placed alongside scriptural proofs in order to castigate contemporary morality. All of this was rooted in a style which eschewed the pleasing cadences of Latin and Greek in favour of the aural punch delivered by elaborate alliteration and unabashed condemnation.

⁷ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.126, 131. A marginal note gives the date when the sermon on dearth was preached.

⁸ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.122, 317, 319, 322; Walter, ‘Politics of Subsistence’, p.132.

In order to make sense of Bentham's approach to these themes, we need first to sketch the contours of the local religious and economic context. Like Suffolk, the county of Northamptonshire became famous for its partnerships of godly gentry and puritan ministers, although in this case the church court structure offered a rival power base to Arminian clergy. By the early 1630s, divisions over the proper response to this threat led to serious fractures within the godly community itself. Both Bentham's exhortations to charity and his condemnations of enclosure were shaped by his awareness of these growing religious tensions and rivalries and of the need to construct the truly godly community according to the 'moderate' agenda of himself and his patron.

The landscape by which Bentham was surrounded as preacher and pastor provided a physical reminder of the drastic changes that had precipitated the Midland Rising of 1607. The legacy of this rebellion certainly influenced Bentham's critique of enclosure but also, it will be suggested, can be detected in his exhortations to charity. Even in the wake of the Rising, however, alternative ideals of the agrarian economy were being articulated with increasing confidence. As his text makes clear, Bentham was keenly aware of these competing voices urging agrarian 'improvement'. Rather than offering an outright challenge to the values they embodied, however, he appropriated aspects of their discourse and engaged directly with their stated priorities. The 1630s of course also witnessed a crucial period of creative tension in the formulation of welfare policies. The inadequacy of market regulation in response to the dearth of 1630-31 underlined the need for an alternative system of transfer payments. Bentham explicitly endorsed the latter as a response to dearth, but rather than

advocate compulsory rating, he offered alternative means to link the coercive force of the law with the relief of the poor.

Bentham's critique, it will be argued, was constructed in dialogue with his personal priorities and parochial experience. As his own testament of his parochial experiences suggests, he saw himself not merely as a loyal servant to Montagu but as an active agent in guiding his patron's actions and preserving his reputation. This guidance extended to encouraging Montagu's intervention in parochial welfare strategies and, crucially, warning him of the dangers of enclosure. In Weekley, magistrate and minister worked together to preserve good government in the name of the godly. Bentham's close association with Montagu linked him to a figure whose wealth and status was far above even the wealthiest of his tenants. Upon his appointment to Broughton, Bentham's position shifted. He had greater financial independence but was also surrounded by a number of wealthy yeoman farmers. When he first took on the incumbency here, therefore, he was probably in a relatively disadvantageous position.

Overall, Bentham's social gospel is not a straightforward 'testimony' of agrarian transformation and 'charity grown cold', nor simply a heartfelt plea for the poor, but rather a process by which his own experiences and priorities, and his self-perception as a powerful preacher, were built into a complex narrative of change.⁹

⁹ For the use of Bentham's critique of enclosure as 'evidence' or 'testimony' of the destructive impact of enclosure see Tate, 'Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire', 147; P.A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (NRS 23, Gateshead, 1968), p.147.

I THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE GODLY: ALLEGIANCES, RIVALRIES AND DISPUTES

I.i. Precise Gentlemen and Godly Ministers

The diocese of Peterborough, encompassing the counties of Northamptonshire and Rutland, was a celebrated hub of puritan activity as early as the 1570s. Over the next forty years the godly cause continued to increase in strength and develop its strategic aims, a trajectory which owed a great deal to the county's leading landowners.¹⁰ The Montagus of Boughton, Ishams of Lamport and Knightleys of Fawsley were among the influential gentry families renowned for their support of godly clergy. Although other families such as the Treshams of Rushton remained committed Catholics, puritan sympathisers had, by the mid-1580s, succeeded in cementing their leading role in local political life. In this way, the pursuit of godly reformation through the close relationship between magistrates and parochial ministers became a defining aspect of public life in the diocese. The political advantages to be gained by an affiliation with the society of the saints did not go unnoticed. A set of scurrilous verses produced around the time of the Midland Rising libelled a number of local landowners as grasping, lascivious and inconstant in their faith. It was said of Sir Valentine Knightley, for example, that 'for a Puritan he woulde passe / yet for Gayne woulde goe to Masse' and of Sir William Lane that 'to God he is unsure: though he wold be counted pure'. Sir Edward Montagu, the author(s) hinted, 'wold be thought precise' as a means of

¹⁰ Much of the material in the following section draws on the two seminal studies of religious conflict in Northamptonshire between 1558 and 1642: Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough* and Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts'.

compensating for the somewhat lowly origins of his family.¹¹ As well as these prominent figures, lesser members of the landowning community such as Edward Dallison of Cransley were also conspicuous supporters of a conscientious preaching ministry. Not all of the godly gentry exhibited the same radicalism as Sir Richard Knightley (d.1615) – who was involved in the printing of the Marprelate tracts and in the *classis* movement of the 1580s – and his supporters, such as Sir Euseby Andrews of Charwelton.¹² Nevertheless, the determination of the ecclesiastical authorities after the accession of James I to impose uniformity on the diocese prompted an unprecedented display of unity from the godly community. In 1605 Richard Knightley, his son Valentine, and Edward Montagu were deputed to present a petition to the king on behalf of recently deprived ministers, to which forty-five gentlemen had added their signatures.

As well as attacks on their authority from external agents, the godly also faced opposition from within their locality. As Bill Sheils has pointed out, the diocese was not a ‘puritan country estate’.¹³ In the central and eastern parts of Northamptonshire especially, the godly found themselves living cheek by jowl with prominent recusants and their supporters among the people. This proximity to Catholics may in part account for the dynamism of protestant activism in the county and for some of the factional rivalries that emerged in the late sixteenth century. But the godly were equally, if not more, conscious of the slurs they

¹¹ BL Add. MS 5832, fos.204^r, 205^v. I am grateful to Bill Sheils and Steve Hindle for providing me with his transcript of this MS. The Montagu family made their fortune through the law in the early sixteenth century. The family name was only adopted in the mid-fifteenth century when Richard Ladde, a prosperous yeoman of Hanging Houghton (Northants.) adopted his wife’s family name (see <http://www.boughtonhouse.org.uk> [section on family history]).

¹² Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough*, pp.112, 117; Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p.183.

¹³ Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough*, p.105.

faced at the hands of their 'lukewarm' protestant or unregenerate neighbours. Furthermore, the threat from a stridently conformist group presented itself particularly early in Peterborough diocese in the form of Thomas Dove, bishop from 1601 to 1630, and the group of Arminian clerics he appointed to positions in the church court structure. Godly clergy and laity had to remain vigilant against threats to their reputation – and of course to the reputation of their 'profession' – stemming from charges of hypocrisy like those presented with such relish in the scurrilous local libel of 1607. In 1636 John Barker, vicar of Pytchley and 'taken for a strict godly man', found himself on the scaffold for his part in the murder of his illegitimate child. Barker's narrative of his own downfall was concerned as much with shoring up the credit of puritanism and its professors as it was with his own repentance and conversion. He identified himself as one whose profession had previously been 'a mere outside, nothing in truth' and the lesson of his fate was that men must 'walk in that way which is called puritanism, or you shall never come to heaven'.¹⁴

One aspect of the godly's piety that would come under attack from their enemies in the 1630s was the mutually supportive relationship between patron and protégé. The godly gentry of Northamptonshire not only offered financial support to their appointees but also allowed their country seats to become local preaching centres. One anti-puritan minister described such relationships as being sustained by the covetousness of an impoverished clergy on the one side and by gentlemen with a desire 'to please themselves and to be voiced abroad for religious persons in giving entertainment to godly ministers' on the other.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lake, 'The Godly and their Enemies', pp.145-50.

¹⁵ The Shrewsbury minister Peter Studley cited in Lake, 'The Godly and their Enemies', p.176.

Although this was doubtless the view of many contemporaries, it perhaps underplays the potential for a minister in this partnership to carve out an active role as counsellor and spiritual guide to a social superior. In 1585, for example, Thomas Isham sent a book containing his meditations on the transitoriness of life to the minister William Fludd, declaring Fludd 'of great skill to judge thereof' and implicitly seeking assurance of his own piety. In the 1620s, Sir Edward Montagu claimed to appreciate one of Robert Bolton's dedicatory epistles since it 'shewd him what he should be & doe' rather than offering straightforward praise.¹⁶

Opportunities abounded for ministers to guide their patrons and their fellow clergy through the medium of the pulpit. Like Suffolk, Northamptonshire was host to a number of combination lectures, including the Kettering lecture at which Bentham preached. The clergy were also zealous attendees of one another's parochial sermons. Further opportunities for godly sociability existed in the form of the public fasts that became widespread in the 1580s. It would, however, be mistaken to suggest that this sustained sociability translated into homogeneity in beliefs and priorities even before the upheavals of the 1620s and 1630s. Many of those in the diocese with a non-conformist pedigree remained unmoved by the presbyterian movement of the 1580s and there were of course various degrees of conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities. The place of non-conformity in puritan identity was nevertheless particularly contested from the late 1620s. Whilst a moderate puritan like Bentham was determined to equate his style of piety with political and religious obedience, there were others, both clerical and lay, for whom conscience dictated a quite different response.

¹⁶ Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough*, pp.100-01; NRO Montagu MS 186, p.29.

I.ii. Internal Tensions and Divisions

By the 1630s the godly community had begun to fracture as the fault lines between moderate puritans and their more radical colleagues were exposed and exploited. The extent to which the ecclesiastical and fiscal policies of the Caroline regime helped to drive a wedge between the leading gentry families is made clear in the increasing hostility between the heads of the Montagu and Knightley families. Following his elevation to the peerage in 1621, Montagu increasingly identified himself with, and tailored his magisterial activism to, the policies and priorities of central government. When, in December 1625, Richard Knightley (d.1639) urged Montagu to lead a search for recusants in the county, Montagu refused on the basis of 'an observance to be held amongst us of the nobility not to thrust ourselves into particular services without special command'. Furthermore, he described the payment of the loan in 1627 as the 'duty of one Christian Brother . . . to lend to another'. Montagu's willing accession to the crown's demands and attempts to persuade his neighbours to follow his example ultimately 'lost him the love of his countrey, untill which time they would have lived & dyed with him'. A libel published against him locally around this time accused him of being 'the grand promoter or informer of this country'. Knightley, on the other hand, was a vociferous opponent of both the forced loan and Ship Money, and was a leader of parliamentary opposition to crown policies in the late 1620s.¹⁷

¹⁷ Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp.17, 132, 200; HMC, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry* (3 vols., London, 1899), III, pp.257-58; NRO Montagu MS 3.207; HMC, *Buccleuch*, I, p.265; R. Cust, *The forced loan and English politics: 1626-1628* (Oxford, 1987), pp.224-25; NRO Montagu MS 186, p.36.

It became increasingly difficult, therefore, for these men to present a united front against any threat to their political authority in the county. As early as 1618 the Earl of Westmoreland, Sir Francis Fane, was trying to establish a conformist power base to rival Northamptonshire's dominant godly clique. In 1626, against the advice of his fellow justices, Montagu supported the parliamentary candidature of Sir Lewis Watson, a client of the Duke of Buckingham with strong court connections. If Watson was elected, Montagu was warned, it would be likely that the 'Lord of Westmoreland's eldest son [shall] come in for the second place and so carry it by your Lordship's power'. As a result of Montagu's actions, the election pact with other godly gentry was ruptured and his nominees were rejected by the electorate in 1626 and 1628 in favour of opponents of the forced loan.¹⁸ Thus Montagu was struggling to maintain his image of beneficent paternalism that he had cultivated in the first two decades of the century, both through his public support of godly ministers and in revealing to parliament the economic problems faced by his county.¹⁹

In these circumstances, the ecclesiastical authorities could pursue a policy of divide and rule that alienated the more radical gentry and clergy whilst appealing to moderate Calvinist opinion. In 1631 Bishop Piers restricted participation in the Kettering lecture to certain named preachers, including Arminians such as Robert Sibthorpe and moderate Calvinists such as Bentham and Nicholas Estwick. By 1636, however, the return to the lecture of 'Inconformable factious' preachers had resulted in its cessation. The popularity

¹⁸ J.K. Greunfelder, 'The Parliamentary Election in Northamptonshire, 1626', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 4 (1968-9), 159-65; Cope, *Life of a Public Man*, pp.97-98; HMC, *Buckleuch*, I, p.234; HMC, *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu* (London, 1900), p.110 (Robert, Lord Spencer to Lord Montagu, 6 January 1626).

¹⁹ HMC, *Buckleuch*, III, p.182; HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.42.

of such preachers among a large section of the laity was suggested by Bentham himself, who described the ‘maine cause’ of the lecture’s suppression as the dangerously selective attendance of many men ‘when some one or few men preached’. Throughout the 1630s non-conformist puritans like Thomas Ball in Northampton and Daniel Cawdrey of Great Billing were preaching and writing against Laudian innovations and were among a small group of ministers who openly refused to read the Book of Sports in 1633. Several godly ministers also risked the wrath of the ecclesiastical authorities by independently calling public fasts.²⁰ This opposition to authority of course allowed hard-line conformists such as Robert Sibthorpe to depict puritanism as a danger to the social order – a ‘*Rebellio Puritanica*’ – that had to be subdued in the name of peace and true religion.²¹ For a moderate like Bentham, it was imperative that this association between godliness and sedition was broken, even if it meant suppressing some of his more controversial doctrines in line with official policy.²² Unlike many of his fellow puritans, he appears – publicly at least – to have been convinced by Laud’s insistence on the irenic and even-handed character of his policies. In his own eyes Bentham was – in 1630 as much as in the 1660s – not a traitor to the godly cause but merely a ‘Lover of, and Labourer for Truth, Peace, Unity, Unanimity, Uniformity and Order’.²³

²⁰ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.11-12; Webster, *Godly Clergy*, p.71.

²¹ A letter from Sibthorpe to John Lambe cited in Fielding, ‘Arminianism in the Localities’, p.110.

²² In *The Christian conflict*, which appeared after the publication of the Book of Sports in 1633, Bentham avoided any explicit reference to sabbath observance, even though *The societie of the saints* was saturated with this topic.

²³ Como, ‘Predestination and Political Conflict’, p.291; Bentham, *A dissuasive from error*, Title Page.

II CONFRONTING ECONOMIC CHANGE: ENCLOSURE, REBELLION AND DEARTH

II.i. The Midland Rising and its Aftermath

The reputation of the Northamptonshire gentry was forged not only through their political and religious conduct but also through their responses to economic change. Over the first half of the seventeenth century, the 'champion' region in the centre of the country contended with the effects of large-scale enclosure and conversion to pasture; population pressure in its forest villages; and the continuing uncertainty of its grain supply. These three factors combined to produce the infamous Midland Rising in the summer of 1607, which involved anything between 900 and 8000 husbandmen, artisans and labourers.²⁴ In Northamptonshire, the hedge-breakers focused on the most recently and most dramatically depopulated parishes at Rushton, Haselbech and Newton— the seats of the recusant Sir Thomas Tresham and his cousin— and the nearby lordship of Pytchley, home to Sir Euseby Isham.²⁵ These enclosures were only some of the most prominent illustrations of changes in agrarian practice in the second half of the sixteenth century, which had seen a dramatic increase in the number of enclosures and sheep-flocks in the densely-populated eastern division of the county.²⁶ Five years before the rising itself, riots had taken place in the forest village of Brigstock, in response to Robert Cecil's enclosure of the parks that offered fuel, timber and herbage to the residents of this increasingly overcrowded

²⁴ Martin, *Feudalism to Capitalism*, p.173. One contemporary estimated that 5000 men had been involved in riots in Northamptonshire alone (*The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer, 1606-1607*, ed. D.H. Wilson (New York, 1971), p.366).

²⁵ Finch, *Five Northamptonshire Families*, pp.72-74, 87; Martin, *Feudalism to Capitalism*, pp.185-86.

²⁶ J.E. Martin, 'Sheep and Enclosure in Sixteenth-Century Northamptonshire', *AgHR* 36 (1985), 50; J. Thirsk, 'Enclosing and Engrossing', in *AHEW*, IV, pp.247-48. IIMC, *Beaulieu*, p.42.

village. Many of the rioters of 1607 were landless labourers or artificers from areas such as this, and from the populous town of Kettering.²⁷

The widespread implication of the gentry and magistracy in illegal or unpopular enclosures in the Midlands was hinted at in the seditious libels and anonymous letters that circulated in the wake of the rebellion. *The pooremans Joy & the gentlemans plague*, an anonymous tract produced in Lincolnshire, offered bloodcurdling warnings to 'Yow gentlemen that rack your rents, and trow downe land for corne' and threatened with violence those who stood 'in Justice steed'. An anonymous letter received by the godly Warwickshire JP Sir John Newdegate in November 1607 presented a scathing critique of his planned enclosures, claiming these would 'tend for your private benefitt or to the publique hurte & disadvantage of yor poor neighbors & tennants'. The Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, moreover, acknowledged in his correspondence with the council that it had been 'a hard task' to find enough men 'as are least interested in these depopulations' to act as commissioners for the discovery of illegal enclosures. Even gentlemen who sat on the commission were not exempt from rumours about depopulation on their estates. Writing to Sir Edward Montagu in 1608, Edward Lord Zouche recounted hearing a whisper that even 'poor Boughton's enclosures must . . . go down'.²⁸

²⁷ L. Stone, 'The Fruits of Office: The Case of Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury, 1596-1612', in Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor & Stuart England*, p.108; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp.171-74; HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.118 [for origins of rioters]. For the effects of enclosure on the population, commerce and grain prices in market towns such as Kettering see PRO SP 16[1]/307/2 ('The grevaunces alleaged severallye by those that have pulled downe the hedges, pales of parkes & chases & from those likewise that have encoraged them to doe the same').

²⁸ 'The pooremans Joy and the gentlemans plague' (1607), fos.40-41; Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence', p.136; HMC, *Salisbury*, XIX, p.208 (The Earl of Rutland [Sir John Manners] to the Earl of Salisbury, 6 August 1607); HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.85.

The rioters were eventually suppressed at Newton in June 1607, at the hands of a makeshift force led by Montagu. Following this, and the summary execution of the leading rioters, commissioners set about implementing the king's commandment that 'some symmetry be used between my justice upon the diggers and them that furnished them the cause to offend'. The exemplary punishment of 'the principal offenders . . . of worst fame' extended to at least fifteen prominent Northamptonshire gentlemen, including Sir Euseby Isham, Sir Thomas Tresham and Walter Montagu, Sir Edward's brother.²⁹ The shock waves that the Rising had sent through the landowning classes did not, however, prevent further enclosures from going ahead. In 1618, for example, Daniel Ward received a licence to enclose a further 132 acres in Great and Little Houghton, despite his conviction for depopulation and conversion in 1608 and his witnessing of renewed rioting in Great Houghton in the same year.³⁰ An acute awareness of the county's poor soil and remoteness from any means of exporting grain encouraged some commentators to argue for a more comprehensive reorganisation of agrarian practice. Immediately after the rebellion, the privy council was presented with a 'Consideration of the Cause in Question before the Lords touching Depopulation', which compared the wealth and populations of the 'champion' county of Northamptonshire with the enclosed county of Somerset. The author concluded that by 'redressing the fault of depopulation and leaving enclosing and converting arbitrable as in other shires the poor man shall be satisfied in his end: habitation; and the gentleman not hindered in his desire:

²⁹ HMC, *Salisbury*, XIX, pp.355-56 (King James to the Earl of Salisbury, 3 December 1607); Martin, 'Enclosure and the Inquisitions of 1607', 43.

³⁰ *VCH Northants*, IV, p.262; PRO STAC 8/295/22; SP 14/113/21. For the supposed belief among some landlords in the aftermath of the Midland Rising that they could continue to enclose 'if reasonable fynes may quiet them', see SP 14/35/52.

improvement'. An anonymous Jacobean manuscript on a similar theme survives among the Montagu Papers. The first part described 'A principal cause of impoverishing the husbandman and farmer in the county of Northampton', whilst a second section offered 'A remedy of help for these discommodities before mentioned'. The author of this text did not explicitly endorse the conversion of land to pasture but he nevertheless criticised the common field system, which ensured that 'no man can truly be master of his own, but that one man oppreseth another'. He described the tyranny of the richer farmer's plough and subsequent encroachments on neighbouring farms and on common land. His remedy was to enclose the commons and allow the arable land to be farmed in severalty, thereby increasing the efficiency and diversity of stock-rearing.³¹

Depopulating enclosure and the withdrawal of land from tillage in the Midlands did not proceed entirely unchecked in the years between the depopulation commission of 1607 and the publication of Bentham's second treatise in 1635. As the government renewed its investigations into illegal enclosures in the 1630s, the agrarian activities of members of the Northamptonshire ruling elite were subjected to closer scrutiny.³² Lord Montagu's correspondence at this time displays a distinct desire to avoid any association with depopulating enclosure that might be uncovered by the

³¹ 'A Consideration of the Cause in Question before the Lords touching Depopulation, 5 July 1607', in J. Thirsk and J.P. Cooper (eds.), *Seventeenth-century Economic Documents* (Oxford, 1972), pp.106-07; HMC, *Beaulieu*, pp.107-08.

³² Thirsk, 'Changing Attitudes to Enclosure', pp.525-26. In 1636 Thomas, Lord Brudenell of Deene was fined £1000 and ordered to restore eight farms by Archbishop Laud, who accused him of 'devouring the people with a shepherd and a dog' by the enclosure of his estate at Hougham (Lincs.). Brudenell defended his actions on the grounds that it was a 'most benign and charitable inclosure such as England could not produce' (PRO SP 16/319/104).

investigations of the state.³³ Even where there was no risk of punishment by the authorities, objections to enclosure might stem from the memory of earlier riots. This was apparently the case in relation to Brigstock, where Montagu held a substantial amount of land. In 1634, as part of the settlement of a dispute involving the Brigstock tenants' use of common land in neighbouring Benefield, Montagu was ordered to enclose his allotted portion of the wastes. His unwillingness to obey this decree may have owed something to a fear that the inhabitants of Brigstock, many of whom were heavily dependent on access to the Benefield wastes, might revive their earlier direct action against unpopular enclosures. Any potential damage to Montagu's lands was much less of an issue than the potential damage to his paternalistic reputation. As he wrote to the Exchequer commissioners in March 1635, 'I thank God hitherto I have not been a Greedy Incloser. And I hope by his Grace that he will not suffer me to go oute of the world with that [stane] Seandall'.³⁴

II.ii. Responses to Dearth

The continuing lack of a significant surplus of grain increased the risk of a bad harvest year leading to high prices in local markets and at the same time limited the possibilities for ameliorating such crises. Thus in 1630 Montagu was forced to abandon a project for selling corn at under-prices to the poor around his

³³ HMC, *Buccleuch*, III, p.368. In this letter to his lawyer, Robert Tanfield, in 1634, Montagu noted that land he had sought to purchase in Staughton (Leics.) was 'upon a new improvement by depopulation' and declared it 'somewhat hazardous to deal with' if 'the state call that in question'. Tanfield confirmed that the purchase was unwise, since 'the State hath such a severe eye upon all the new inclosures, and as is thought will take some course for preventing future and punishing present offences of that nature as general nuisances to the common wealth'.

³⁴ PRO E 178/5553; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp.178-79; NRO Montagu MS 3.217.

residence at Barnwell St Andrew, because he was unable to obtain sufficient supplies from the farmers of the region. Montagu was forced to concede that transfer payments were more appropriate than an artificial lowering of prices. 'I failed in my project for the poor', he wrote to his brother at the end of the year, 'and therefore I give my poor neighbours so much in money as I intended in abatement of price, and they are better pleased with it'.³⁵

The practical experience of many local magistrates suggested the limitations of a dearth policy that relied exclusively on market regulation. In several counties 'want of monies and want of employment' were identified as more pressing problems than high prices and market supply. In the crisis of 1629-31 the privy council itself recognised that 'the poor suffer as much in the want of work as in the price of corn'. The Caroline Book of Orders thus encouraged an increase in poor rates and the implementation of existing statutes to set the poor on work. In September 1630 the council also wrote to justices in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridge, ordering that the statutes regulating wages be properly enforced.³⁶ Unlike these counties, however, Northamptonshire had 'no special trade in the county, to set people on work'. Given the limited opportunities in the early seventeenth century for employment in forestry and ancillary industries, the poor cottagers in the overpopulated forest villages relied on by-employments such as knitting, hemp-spinning and lace-making, along with seasonal wage labour on nearby farms. The author of 'A principal cause' believed that only 'vent for their people into Virginia, or increase of trades as

³⁵ HMC, *Buccleuch*, III, pp.272-73, 355.

³⁶ Hindle, *State and Social Change*, pp.150-51; Slack, 'Dearth and Social Policy', 11-15; Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.66; Leonard, *Early History of English Poor Relief*, p.162.

well in some measure, as the City of London' could deal with the acute problem of 'overplus of people' that existed in many of the county's villages.³⁷

Transfer payments might be an increasingly popular, if problematic, response to high corn prices, but they could not erase a 'widely held tradition which believed enclosure to be the real cause of cause of dearth'.³⁸ Robert Wilkinson had upheld this tradition in his sermon preached before the enclosure commissioners, which consistently linked depopulation and the turning of 'corne into grasse' with the removal of 'the staffe of bread' from the poor. In 1608 there was 'some stirring of the poor people' in the markets of Northamptonshire, despite the action taken by the authorities to prevent any transportation of grain. It may be that these men and women invoked an explanation of dearth that pointed the finger of blame at enclosers rather than at middlemen or covetous farmers. Certainly in Warwickshire in the same year the shortage of grain caused 'the people arrogantly and seditiously to speake of the not reformeing of Conversion of errable land in pasture by enclosing'.³⁹ It will be argued in due course that Bentham's awareness of this popular explanation of enclosure helped shape his treatment of the theme of dearth. Before turning to Betham's texts, however, we must spend some time considering his construction and assessment of his pastoral role in the parishes of Weekley and Broughton.

³⁷ HMC, *Buccleuch*, III, p.182; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp.159-62; J. Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England', in *AHEW*, IV, pp.96-97; *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries* 6:4 (June 1928), 89-90; *VCH Northants*, II, pp.333, 337; HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.109.

³⁸ Walter and Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order', 30.

³⁹ Wilkinson, *A sermon preached at North-hampton*, sigs.D3^{r-v}; HMC, *Salisbury*, XX, p.174.

III THE DYNAMICS OF DEPENDENCE: PATRON, CLIENT AND PARISHIONERS IN TWO NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PARISHES

III.i. Governing Weekley

Bentham was appointed vicar of Weekley, near Kettering, in 1618. At first sight this was not a particularly attractive benefice, since it had no glebe land or vicarage house and its most valuable tithes had been commuted into a stipendiary payment from the lord of the manor. When this was combined with tithes in kind from the other parishioners, it is unlikely that the living was worth more than £30 in the early seventeenth century.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, its one major advantage was the proximity it afforded to a powerful and wealthy patron. The parish was dominated by the grandeur of Boughton House, which served as Montagu's principal residence and from which he exercised his lordship of Weekley manor.⁴¹ Bentham described the benefits that stemmed from this propinquity in his 'Life of Montagu', a manuscript addressed to Sir Edward's son and probably intended as a *post mortem* eulogy.⁴² As well as augmenting Bentham's annual stipend by £10 and adding a piece of pasture land to the endowments of the vicarage, Montagu also provided Bentham with occasional payments and support during times of dearth and misfortune and regularly sent gifts of meat, wood and

⁴⁰ NRO Weekley Glebe Terrier, 1720: the stipend at this time was £25 and the small tithes were valued at £14. The Rental rolls of 1545 (NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.67) refer to a 'Church House'. It is possible that Bentham lived in this freehold property and paid a small rent.

⁴¹ Sir Edward Montagu, CJCP, acquired part of the manor of Boughton in 1528 and the remainder in 1541. Weekley (including lands in Warkton, Geddington and Kettering) was acquired in 1544 (Bridges, I, pp.346, 349). By 1546, the manor house of Weekley was no longer extant (NRO Montagu (Boughton), 7.67). Montagu also resided occasionally at Barnwell St Andrew, another Northamptonshire parish, some twelve miles north-east of Weekley.

⁴² NRO Montagu MS 186. A number of references in the text – for example, to Montagu's son Christopher's death in 1641 – suggest the text was written between 1641 and 1642. The use of the past tense, however, makes it clear that this was intended to be read or presented – and possibly also published – after Montagu's death.

gold from Boughton House. In 1635 Bentham concluded that Montagu's 'contributing to me so often and in such abundance' had allowed him and his family to live 'with comfort, contentment and plenty'.⁴³ The text does not, however, offer a straightforward narrative of dependence. Within the rhetorical context of eulogy, Bentham produced examples of his own powers of spiritual persuasion and direction. These relate particularly to his patron but also to some of his other parishioners. Used with care alongside other sources, therefore, this manuscript can help us construct a picture of the dynamics of governance – including the governance of consciences – in the parish of Weekley.

As landlord of all but one of the tenancies in Weekley, Montagu exercised significant control over the economic life of the parish. Bentham depicted him as an ideal paternalistic landlord: 'he was no grinder of the faces of his tenants by fine and rents, hee tooke not all that he could get for his Land & Livings, but used such christian equity and charitable moderation, that men might comfortably live upon his lands by their honest labour'. Within Weekley, Bentham claimed, rents remained stable (and low for the poorest inhabitants) and cottagers were exempted from the payment of fines. It is quite possible, of course, that Montagu considerably adjusted the entry fines for his other tenants, even if these did not reach crippling levels.⁴⁴ One of the effects of this would have been to hinder further upward mobility by the more substantial tenants. Certainly by 1650 there was 'not any man in Weekly', apart from Lord Montagu

⁴³ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.25, 27; Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, sig.A3' (Epistle).

⁴⁴ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.19. It is interesting that whilst Bentham gives the value of rental income in Weekley, he gives no figure for income received from fines. In 1595 the sum total of the 21-year fine was over £350 (NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.67: '1595: An Account of what Lands the Weekley Tenants then held and what Rent and Fine they severally pay for the same'). For a discussion of the use of entry fines as a principal means of adjusting income from land in this period see E. Kerridge, 'The Movement of Rent 1540-1640', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 6:1 (1953), 16-34.

‘that hath Land either Freehold, or Coppy hold of £10 a yeare value’. The Hearth Tax records from 1674 also suggest that the number of husbandmen and lesser yeomen still far outweighed the number of substantial yeomen in the parish.⁴⁵ The Montagu estates at Boughton had undergone significant changes over the course of the sixteenth century, so that Montagu himself had ‘no tilladge’. Weekley, by contrast, appears to have retained its open field system and its mixed husbandry, with only minor adaptations being made by the wealthier tenants. Bentham presented the earlier conversion of the Montagu demesne farm to pasture in a positive light: he emphasised that the lack of tillage reduced the seigneurial burdens on the customary tenants, whilst remaining silent regarding its negative impact on employment opportunities for the landless labourer.⁴⁶

The poorest parishioners were heavily dependent on Montagu’s beneficence. He provided them with food and beer ‘upon theire dole-daies’ and, according to Bentham, ‘kept them continually in worke’ on his estate.⁴⁷ Once their years of service were over, these men and women might be granted a place in Montagu’s almshouse, which he founded in 1613. Montagu drew up a list of ‘Orders for the governing and directing of the Maister & Brethren of Weekely Hospital’, which included the stipulation that no ‘common drunkard, riotous

⁴⁵ NRO Acc. 1977/227 (Value of Estates, 1650); PRO E 179/254/14: 1133 Weekley (col. 18-B-3). This extrapolation of social status from number of hearths is based on the interpretive framework in Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p.35.

⁴⁶ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.19; Bridges, I, p.349; NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.66/5-7: Weekley manorial court rolls; NRO Enclosure Enrolment Vol. M, p.33 (1810); Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.136. Boughton park itself and the enclosed demesne land adjoining the site of the ancient manor house of Weekley had probably been enclosed by Montagu’s grandfather: A manorial survey of 1544-45 describes the manor house ‘with the meadows adjoynyng’ and a ‘new close’, both of which were in the occupation of the manorial lord (NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.67).

⁴⁷ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.25. For the expectation that a large house would provide employment for the poor of the community see F. Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate* (Cambridge, 1980), p.261 and SP 16[1]/307/2.

person, adulterer, or Common swearer' be admitted and commanded attendance at church and at catechism sessions with the minister. Any resident 'backward or negligent' in religion was to be 'converted upon warning, or else to be displaced'. As vicar, Bentham was expected to act as governor of the almshouse and by his own account played an active role in ensuring that these orders were followed to the letter. He described a 'hospital man', a former brewer to Montagu's father, who suffered from the occupational hazard of drunkenness. Since Bentham 'could not diswade him from that vile life, upon my complaint of him, he was cast out, & continued so a long time . . . untill he came to me acknowledging his offence and promising reformation, upon which I requested and had him in againe'. Another resident who held 'atheisticall opinions stubbornly' was complained of and Bentham had 'power given me to keepe away his gowne & his weekly allowance so long as I saw good cause why'.⁴⁸

Magistrate and minister thus worked together to ensure that this aspect of Weekley's 'mixed economy of welfare' had a reforming as well as an ameliorative purpose.⁴⁹ Bentham is also likely to have played an active role in distributing the collections 'which his Lordship and others gave at Communion and fast dayes' to the parish poor. These helped to ensure that during Bentham's incumbency 'there was never any taxe for the poore' in Weekley.⁵⁰ The association of communion with the provision of parochial poor relief had been characteristic of godly communities such as Dedham in the 1580s and the communion plate remained an important source of parochial relief into the

⁴⁸ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.26-27.

⁴⁹ J. Innes, 'The 'Mixed Economy of Welfare' in Early Modern England: Assessments of the Options from Hale to Malthus (c.1683-1803)', in M. Dauntton (ed.), *Charity, Self-interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996), pp.139-80.

⁵⁰ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.25-26.

seventeenth century.⁵¹ Both the communion service and the observance of fasts are likely to have involved a core of godly activists, whom Bentham described as his 'pious and practising . . . parishioners'. These may have included the three relatively wealthy tenants whose wills he witnessed during his incumbency.⁵²

Although Weekley was spared the large increase in landless labourers experienced by forest villages such as Brigstock or Geddington, it was not entirely immune from the pressures associated with economic change. Cottagers from elsewhere might seek intermittent use of Weekley's resources. In 1616 the manorial court ordered 'that none within this Lordship shall lette any comon for calves to any foreyner but onelye to thinhabitants'.⁵³ The collective priorities of Weekley's customary tenants remained the protection of arable crops and preservation of co-operative husbandry. Sometimes this might require restrictions on gleaning – as after the poor harvest of 1597 – at other times more prosperous farmers were ordered to lay open small closes in the common fields for the folding of the common flock.⁵⁴ As Kettering began to develop a specialist wool market in the late sixteenth century, increasing efforts were made to prevent the overstocking of the commons with sheep.⁵⁵ The growth in the

⁵¹ In Dedham (Essex) it was ordered in 1585 that at 'every communion ther be a collection for the poore by one of the Churchwardens after the cuppe be delyvered'. This was to be 'bestowed' on the poor 'according to the discretion of the minister, collectors and two of the headboroughs' (P. Collinson, J. Craig and B. Usher (eds.), *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church: Dedham and Bury St Edmunds 1582-1590* (Church of England Record Society 10, 2003), pp.128, 138. For the dispensation of communion money in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.132-34.

⁵² NRO Montagu MS 186, p.9; NRO P Will: Bk.22, fo.351 (Rowland Billing, husbandman, 1618); Bk.9, fo.357 (Edward Goozey, 1619); Bk.11, fo.274 (Thomas Firge, miller, 1630). For evidence that some Weekley parishioners were active in their support of godly ministers in the 1580s see Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough*, pp.40, 115.

⁵³ Pettit, *Royal Forests of Northamptonshire*, p.200; NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.66/6 (14 Jac. I). For a similar attempt to prevent strangers taking advantage of common rights, including prohibitions on the pasturing of cattle, see Hindle, 'Persuasion and Protest', 49.

⁵⁴ NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.66/5 (41 Eliz. I); 7.66/6 (undated); 7.66/5 (36 Eliz. I, 42 Eliz. I).

⁵⁵ NRO Montagu (Boughton) 7.66/6 (2 Jac. I, 16 Jac. I, 17 Jac. I). These orders appear to have been aimed at shepherds who added their own sheep to the common flock and tenants who sought to increase their stint through exchange with other farmers.

numbers of labouring poor in the region also had an impact on Montagu's lavish Christmas hospitality. Bentham claimed that 'many hundreds' continued to be served with beef and bread at Boughton house. But whereas formerly guests had taken it in turns to sit at tables *within* the house, after 'many inconveniences' had been 'observed in that course', it was decided that 'onely some of the men' – presumably those considered most respectable – should be allowed inside, whilst the rest were 'served out of the gate' with the women and children.⁵⁶ Montagu nevertheless remained committed to a form of charity that some protestant writers had considered a source of 'great disorder', allowing 'the rude idle [and] prophane' to be relieved at the expense of the 'very poore indeed'.⁵⁷

The social structure of Weekley and the godly activism of prominent inhabitants therefore allowed for surveillance and control over the poor without the institution of compulsory rating that would have sullied the image of Christian generosity among the pious donors. Magistrate, minister, and some parishioners took an active role in this. But the minister was in a unique position to act as governor of consciences and souls. In the context of praising Montagu as an exemplary hearer of the word, Bentham simultaneously affirmed the agency of his own preaching in shaping the actions of his congregation. Thus he had successfully used the pulpit to convince his patron and chief parishioners of the need to enforce strict sabbatarian principles and silence the mills that 'did constantly grinde upon the Lords day'. Even more striking was Bentham's response to the use of a charitable bequest made by Montagu's grandmother to

⁵⁶ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.23-24. For the tendency to relieve the 'alien' poor at the gate see C. Holmes and F. Heal, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.284.

⁵⁷ Rogers, *Treatise of love*, pp.212, 213. Cf. Scott, *The Belgicke pismire*, p.76: 'this *Doore-dole* (as I may call it) rather makes rogues and vagabonds, then releeves aged and impotent persons'.

six local parishes, including Weekley itself.⁵⁸ It had come to Bentham's attention that the parish officers had 'put out their five pounds to usury, purposing to keepe the stocke whole & to give the increase to the neediest neighbours'. He therefore preached 'of that subject [usury], and against that fact in particular', perhaps suggesting that investment in land was the only Christian means of creating a perpetual fund for the poor.⁵⁹ Montagu's immediate response to this pointed sermon was to chastise Bentham 'for not speaking with him privately before I preacht against it publickly'. Nevertheless, once this use of his grandmother's bequest had been publicly condemned by his own minister, Montagu had little choice but to redirect the funds into land. This policing of Montagu's adherence to the principles of the moral economy also encompassed the issue of enclosure. Bentham claimed that when faced with solicitations to improve his estates, Montagu answered with the 'merry' reply, 'Mr Bentham will not let me inclose'. Although Bentham played down his own prohibitive role, he had successfully made the point that his obsession with enclosure had made a lasting impression on his patron.⁶⁰

III.ii. Broughton and the Pressures of Change

Montagu appointed Bentham to the rectory of Broughton, about five miles southwest of Weekley, in January 1632. This preferment brought Bentham more financial independence, but it also thrust him into a parish that displayed greater

⁵⁸ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.9-10; PCC 54 Meade. The towns were Weekley, Warkton, Hemington, Luddington, Barnwell All Saints and Barnwell St Andrew.

⁵⁹ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.10. In the section against usury in *The Christian conflict*, Bentham denied that men may 'as well take for money as for houses and land, etc'. This is based both on scriptural precedent and on the Thomist reasoning that 'house and land yeeld a fruitfull use arising from the nature of the thing . . . but money hath no fruitfull use of it selfe' (pp.355-56).

⁶⁰ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.21.

social instability than his former residence. The most notable sign of this was the participation of thirteen Broughton men in the Midland Rising of 1607.⁶¹ The living itself included great and small tithes; nine acres of glebe land; substantial common rights and a large rectory house, and was worth at least £60 a year by the mid-seventeenth century.⁶² Unlike Weekley, Broughton did not have a single resident lord.⁶³ Instead, it was dominated by a number of substantial farmers: by the mid-seventeenth century, thirteen householders in Broughton held land worth £10 or more.⁶⁴ On the one hand, this pattern of land ownership helped Broughton to avoid the large-scale enclosure and conversion to pasture by a single lord that dramatically altered the face of other Northamptonshire parishes. On the other hand, these commercial farmers were likely to have sought opportunities for increased profit from their lands. Over the course of the seventeenth century they had exchanged or acquired pieces of copyhold land and were either creating or protecting closes of pasture. By 1650, two of those with land valued at £60 and £30 had augmented their estates with purchases of closes in neighbouring Cransley.⁶⁵ Given the relatively straightened financial circumstances of Bentham's early career, it is unlikely that he had accumulated sufficient surplus income to compete for land with the other yeomen farmers in Broughton in the

⁶¹ HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.118.

⁶² NRO Acc. 1977/227; NRO Broughton Glebe Terrier, 1672. Nathaniel Whalley, the rector who prepared this terrier states at the end that this is the quantity of arable land 'as I find it in one of the General Terriers'. The site of the parsonage included 'a messuage with a barn yard, a kickyard, an Orchard and Garden'. In the eighteenth century the parsonage was said to be worth around £140 (Walker, *Sufferings*, p.205).

⁶³ The manor of Broughton was divided between three lords by 1632: William Mulsho (of Finedon), Edward Montagu and Thomas Tullakerne (*VCH Northants*, IV, pp.159-60). Tullakerne dealt with the smallest part of the manor and a descendent of his is recorded among the Hearth Tax returns of 1674. By 1633 Montagu was leasing the execution of affairs in his third of the manor to two of his servants (PCC Twisse 99).

⁶⁴ NRO Acc. 1977/227. These break down as follows: Two with land valued at £60, one at £50, one at £30, four at £20, one at £15, one at £12 and three at £10. It is likely that this included both freehold and copyhold land.

⁶⁵ NRO Broughton Glebe Terrier, 1672; Montagu (Boughton) 17.59, 17.84, 17.118.

first few years of his incumbency. Neither was there a wealthy patron immediately on hand to offer him a free gift of extra land. In these conditions, it was vital that Bentham preserved his income from tithes and glebe, which in turn gave him a vested interest in the maintenance of tillage in the parish.

The presence of several substantial arable farms may have contributed to an increase in the number of agricultural labourers in the parish. In 1674 around a third of Broughton's sixty-six households – the average proportion for a rural area – were poor enough to be exempt from the Hearth Tax. However, two thirds of all the households had only one hearth.⁶⁶ Some of these were certainly widows, but we can nonetheless estimate that nearly 50 per cent of the population consisted of labourers, craftsmen and small husbandmen. Since there is no 1524 subsidy return for Broughton, it is hard to speculate about whether the lower levels of the population expanded significantly over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The existence of three entirely exogamous marriages in the period 1632 to 1643 hints that Broughton may have attracted migrants from communities experiencing the worst effects of economic change.⁶⁷ It is certainly possible that large sections of Broughton's population were increasingly dependent either on wages from agricultural work or on leasing small amounts of

⁶⁶ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p.319; PRO E 179/254/14 207 Broughton (col. 4-A-3). This percentage is based on subtracting all houses with female heads, even where they are not specifically described as widows.

⁶⁷ NRO 52P/92 (Broughton Parish Registers 1632-43: Marriages). This period covers the length of Bentham's pre-war incumbency in Broughton. Although only 19 per cent of marriages over this period were *entirely* endogamous, it is likely that this reflects a custom of marrying in the bride's place of birth rather than an intention to settle in the parish. In only one of the marriages from this period was the woman from a different parish. The only small glimpse we have of attempts to limit the number of migrants comes from around the turn of the eighteenth century, when the manorial court jury charged Thomas Pulver with 'taking an inmater' (NRO Montagu (Boughton) 17.147).

land from the more substantial farmers.⁶⁸ In both cases, access to the parish's limited common pasture would have been central to the household economy.

The enclosures that had taken place in the neighbouring parishes of Cransley and Pytchley would have stimulated an increase in the transient population around Broughton, heightening the pressure on the parish's common resources and the demands made on its population to provide men for the militia.⁶⁹ This experience of the *indirect* effects of enclosure may have combined with a desire to prevent the same thing happening in their own parish to persuade some Broughton inhabitants to join the rioters in 1607.⁷⁰ Whilst the enclosed parishes either side of Broughton were not entirely 'depopulated', they nevertheless exhibited a social structure that testified to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a fortunate few and the practice of individualistic pastoral farming. The existence of large units of land in the hands of a few wealthy (and frequently non-resident) gentry in Pytchley and Cransley contrasted markedly with the numerous medium-sized farms owned by resident yeomen in Broughton.⁷¹ The differences between Broughton and its neighbouring parishes should not, however, be exaggerated. Open field arable farming may have depended on co-operation but it did not guarantee social harmony: the priorities

⁶⁸ By the early eighteenth century a substantial amount of copyhold land was being leased or sublet: NRO Montagu (Boughton) 17.147 (Broughton Miscellaneous Papers).

⁶⁹ In the eighteenth century Broughton's commons were an important source of furze for a number of neighbouring parishes (J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993), p.174). Both Cransley and Pytchley were significantly larger than Broughton but returned the name of only one able man between them to the musters in 1605, whilst Broughton returned nine names (J. Wake, (ed.), *The Montagu Musters Book A.D. 1603-1623* (NRS 7, Northampton, 1935), p.12). For Bentham's anger at this inequality see NRO Montagu MS 186, p.21.

⁷⁰ HMC, *Beaulieu*, p.118. The rebel group from Broughton was comprised of four husbandmen, four labourers, two smiths, a taylor a millwright and a butcher. Some of these men were probably as concerned to protect their common rights as the continuance of open field farming.

⁷¹ In Pytchley in 1650 land was held in units worth up to £500 a year. Only three of the twelve named landholders were inhabitants of the parish. In Cransley the largest lord of the manor and his stepmother held land worth £200 and £330 per year respectively. The owner of the remaining part of the manor held estates worth £100 (NRO Acc. 1977/227).

of the yeoman arable farmer and the cottager dependent on limited commons in a densely populated parish were unlikely to be the same. The wealthier tenants may already have begun piecemeal enclosure of land and had possibly even begun practising convertible husbandry on some parts of the fields.⁷² In his writings, Bentham focused on the negative effects of proximate enclosures on his own parish, but made no mention of the role played by Cransley in feeding the demand for land from Broughton's wealthier inhabitants. In a further paradox, it was Montagu's ability to purchase a close in Cransley that enabled him to avoid the 'usurious' use of his grandmother's bequest.⁷³ In *The Christian conflict*, Bentham was to hold Broughton up as an ideal type of 'champion' community, but this was an ideal mediated through a more complex social reality.

IV THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AT KETTERING

The texts to which we now turn were constructed, with 'enlargement' and some rearrangement, from Bentham's sermons at the Kettering combination lecture.⁷⁴ The relationship between the preached and printed versions of the various parts of these texts is thus particularly problematic. Whilst the section on dearth is explicitly located in a particular place and time, there are no specific references to help us determine where and when other parts of the texts were preached, or even whether they were preached at all. One interpretation of Bentham's

⁷² NRO Montagu (Boughton) 17.

⁷³ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.10, 21.

⁷⁴ *The societie of the saints* was composed from fourteen sermons and 'some additions' but this material is divided into four 'books' and a number of chapters. *The Christian conflict* is described as being '[p]reached in the Lecture of *Kettering* . . . and with some enlargement published'. It is divided into fourteen chapters, with a varying number of sections. Most of these chapters examine a specific Christian duty.

publication strategy might be that he ‘enlarged’ *The Christian conflict* with subjects that would impress the authorities – a condemnation of Antinomianism and criticism of depopulators – in order to disguise the essentially polarised, predestinarian vision of this treatise.⁷⁵ We know from Bentham’s description of his sermons in Weekley, however, that he was keen to preach on specific offences against the moral economy and to use the pulpit as a means of influencing economic practice. Part of the problem lies in the fact that ‘enlargement’ may refer to the radical alteration of entire sections or merely to the addition of a few citations and explanatory marginal notes. The following discussion will work on the basis that at least a version of the section on enclosure was preached or, if it was not, that there remained the potential for the published version to circulate reasonably widely within the locality.⁷⁶ Either way, it is highly likely that Montagu came into contact with this text in some form, as he was both a ‘constant’ attendee at the Kettering lecture and a consumer of Bentham’s sermons and texts.⁷⁷ It is harder to pin down the identity of other auditors, except to say that two other members of the combination ‘heard the Sermons’ on which *The Christian conflict* was based and that the quality of the preachers is likely to have attracted several local godly gentlemen. A market-day

⁷⁵ Both the Title Page of *The Christian conflict* and its address ‘To the Christian Reader’ drew attention to the discussion of these themes. Although not explicitly in contravention of the proclamation of 1629 forbidding debate over predestination, Bentham’s texts are clearly underpinned by the ideas of election, assurance and the moral superiority of the saints. Cf. especially *The Christian conflict*, pp.57-60, which suggested an ontological difference between the elect and the reprobate in their relationship to sin. The wicked man delighted in his iniquity, making ‘a trade of sinning’, whilst the godly man was tortured by his sin, immediately flying ‘with all speed unto the *Lord Jesus*’ to repent, thereby ‘raising himself’ and becoming ‘more nobly resolute against sin and its devilish occasions’.

⁷⁶ Despite the length – and thus expense – of *The societie of the saints*, the printer included ‘Information for the meanest Reader’ in the form of explanations of abbreviations such as ‘i.e.’ and ‘viz.’. It may be that there was an expectation the work would be circulated around several readers once it was published.

⁷⁷ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.11; Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, sigs.A6^v-A7^v (‘To the Christian Reader’).

sermon always had the potential for a large and varied audience, however, even if this potential was not so easily realised once the treatises – 280 and 364 pages long respectively – went into print.⁷⁸

Of overriding importance in the following discussion is the dialogue between text and context. The passages of *The societie of the saints* and *The Christian conflict* that deal with the duty of charity and mercy towards the poor both exhibit and construct the authsor's relationship to various aspects of the mixed economy of welfare. These models of charitable practice reflect elements of Bentham's parochial experience and testify to his attempts to shape the reputation of the godly community whilst confining expressions of collective identity within the limits of obedience and conformity. The need for 'moderation' and obedience was a structuring principle of both texts, particularly *The Christian conflict*. This was accompanied by Bentham's stress on the continuity of his worldview with the eternal truths of the church – a point he made through extensive and uncritical quotation from patristic sources. Despite these attempts to present himself as the inheritor of a much longer moralising tradition, it is clear that Bentham was able to manipulate the idiom and debates of early seventeenth-century economic ideology. The constant 'conflict' in which the true Christian was engaged determined the combative idiom that infused Bentham's second treatise, expressed most clearly in the repeated injunction, 'Say not, beloved brethren...'. This text in particular is also very much of its time in its agenda of describing and defining the boundaries of an increasingly fractured godly community.

⁷⁸ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, ¶2^v.

IV.i. Models of Charity

The declaration in *The society of the saints* that ‘Saints must releeve others’ formed part of a familiar argument that ‘practising Protestants’ should mark themselves out by their charity. Alongside the duty to give, however, was the duty of discretion – ‘*judge thy poor*’ – through which the saints could determine the identity of the pious and deserving.⁷⁹ It is easy to gloss over the way in which Bentham appropriated the duty of judgement exclusively to the saints by selectively paraphrasing Scripture. His injunction to ‘judge thy poor’ is explicitly drawn from Psalms 72:2, which actually makes the monarch the agent of justice: ‘He [the king] shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment’. This appropriation ties in nicely with Bentham’s insistence that a committed group of zealous protestants in a parish rendered statutory poor rates unnecessary. It also chimes with his own active policing of the conduct of the poor, particularly his withholding of alms from those who did not ‘religiously worship God’ in the manner demanded by the minister and his patron. In *The Christian conflict* Bentham hinted at a means of executing existing laws to ensure a close association between charity and a reformation of manners:

Say not, beloved brethren, of your distressed neighbours. Give them the law, and whip them; Give them the law, and stock them; until you first give them the law, and relieve them. Our pious and wholesome lawes take order as well for their provision, as punishment. Our sword of justice hath (or ought to have) two edges, one to punish, and correct the criminous, the other to patronize, and defend the distressed. Give them

⁷⁹ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, pp.12, 68.

for every oath and curse according to the law, 2 s. Give them for every one who prophaneth the Sabbath by playing, 3s-4d: by selling, by travelling, 1 l. according to our religious Statutes. Give them from your ale-houses who keepe not the size, 1l: for ale housekeepers suffering men to sit tippling in their houses, 10s: for every tipler in an ale-house 3s-4d &c. for every one who is drunke 5s.⁸⁰

By outlining the penalties forfeited to the poor under the misdemeanour statutes, Bentham suggested how the burden of poor rates could be reduced through the proper enforcement of regulatory legislation. The coercive force of the law could thus become institutionalised in parochial relief, without the development of a reputation for callousness or reliance on the introduction of compulsory rating.⁸¹

A similar insistence on the virtues of order and discipline can be detected in Bentham's elaboration in *The societie of the saints* of the common comparison between the sowing of the husbandman and the charitable works of the Christian. Like other preachers who deployed this image, Bentham explicitly drew on biblical precept and implicitly declared his allegiance with a tradition of social criticism that idealised the plough as a symbol of Christian virtues.⁸² He also displayed an awareness of the likely composition of his audience in a region still dominated by a mixed farming economy. But this passage also owes

⁸⁰ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.127.

⁸¹ For similar suggestions on the use of the misdemeanour statutes to ease the burden of the poor rates see Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.67 [Advice from Justice John Hoskyns to the Herefordshire JPs in 1625 to 'prevent the charge of poor upon every parish']; S. Hindle, 'Exhortation and Entitlement: Negotiating Inequality in English Rural Communities, 1550-1650', in Braddick and Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*, p.112 [Northamptonshire justices order of 1625 combining the 'necessary relief of the poor unable to work' with the presentment of 'all such persons as shall at any time drinke or sweare or take Goddes name in vaine or shall neglect duely to observe and keepe holy the sabbath day'].

⁸² The analogy with husbandry was based on 2.Cor. 9:6n – 'he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully'. Bentham extended the simile to encompass not only the amount that should be given but also the practice and methods of giving. For the idealisation of the plough see above, ch.1, pp.62-63.

something to the idiom of thrift and the rhetoric of self-regulation that characterised the developing discourse of efficient household management. Both the husbandman and the Christian man would ordinarily find themselves with an 'increase' or profit, out of which they could reserve either seed or alms. In harder times, each should be prepared to sacrifice something 'from his backe and belly' in order to secure a future harvest or continued liberality. The simile could also be used to encourage the surveillance of the poor in their own homes. Christian men should seek out the poor, just as the 'husbandman knowing the ground to want seed, sowes although it sayes nothing'.⁸³ The creative elaboration of this idiom may be contrasted with a passage in *The Christian conflict*, in which Bentham turns to the idiom of compassion. By far the greatest part of this speech 'unto you rich men in behalfe of your poore brethren' is an extensive direct quotation from St Chrysostom.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, the fact that Bentham explicitly included an appeal to compassion hints at his reluctance entirely to reject the idea of indiscriminate giving. He was aware that limited almsgiving of this kind could enhance the reputation of the godly. Whatever their objections to begging as a 'disorder in a commonwealth', the saints needed to be seen as naturally generous. 'By their will', Bentham asserted, 'none shall go from their doores empty handed without reliefe according to their ability'. A particular motivation in giving even to those they suspected of an 'evil course of life' was to 'take away all occasion of scandall from God's children, and their profession'. Furthermore, the laws that were meant to discriminate between the idle and unfortunate poor (and therefore

⁸³ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, pp.15-17.

⁸⁴ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.125-26.

make life easier for the benefactor) were 'but sleeping statutes in the execution'. In other words, it was impractical and potentially unchristian to apply discrimination to every act of largesse. When he formulated this passage, Bentham arguably had in mind Montagu's grand hospitality. Even by the 1630s this remained discriminatory only insofar as *how* the poor were relieved rather than *who* was eligible for relief. The positive publicity for these occasions derived partly from their scale, which would have been impossible to achieve if they had been restricted to those thought to be among the elect. By drawing attention to the godly's involvement in giving 'at the doore', moreover, Bentham also publicised their adherence to central directives on the duties of the gentry in their counties.⁸⁵

The desire to align the charitable activism of the godly with obedience to the state also structured Bentham's discussion of fasting, to which the penultimate chapter of *The Christian conflict* is devoted. One of the most important 'companions' to this exercise was the giving 'of almes-deeds, workes of charity', which were 'tokens of our true repentance'. Bentham contended that unless 'we joyne almes to fasting . . . giving so much at the least more to the poore as we should have spent upon our owne bellies: we doe but make religion a cloake to clad and cover covetousnesse'.⁸⁶ This rhetoric echoed the exhortations of the late Elizabethan campaigns for general hospitality, when preachers such as Samuel Gardiner had warned against making 'a gainefull trade and occupation' of fasting.⁸⁷ Both in his text and in practice, Bentham clearly

⁸⁵ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, p.25. For the council orders regarding gentry hospitality see above, ch.4, p.277.

⁸⁶ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.278.

⁸⁷ Cited in Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 54, Cf. the *Order for Publike Prayers* of 1586, which spoke of the conjunction of 'outward exercises of prayer, fasting and alms-deeds' springing from 'sincere and true repentance' ('Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 57).

regarded fasts as a means of expressing the collective identity of the godly. Unlike some of his more radical colleagues, however, he insisted that only the state had the authority to call public fasts. Voluntary fasts were to be performed by 'one person or family at the most' and 'in the most private and retired places'. Insofar as these became an expression of collective godly identity, they did so within the physical boundaries of the parish. True Christians were exhorted to fast privately on 'daies which our Church not onely approves of, but also appoints for the reading of the Word and Prayer: to which enjoyed excellent exercises, many preachers of good note do joyne exposition of some part of the Scriptures'. Thus the private fasts of the truly godly were distinguished from the 'hypocriticall performances' of those who presumed to call a public fast on their own authority. These latter men had much in common with 'deceitfull dissemblers' who practised piety only in public, thus using their profession as 'an engine to scrue themselves into peoples affections, as a stalking horse to catch and inclose popular applause'.⁸⁸

As Peter Lake has suggested, Bentham's proscriptions on the subject of private fasting therefore offer 'a picture of the public observances of the national church being supplemented and subtly transformed by the godly'.⁸⁹ As Bentham's discussion of *public* fasts reveals, however, this attempted harmonisation of godly practices with the broader values of both the ecclesiastical and secular authorities was becoming increasingly difficult. Because no public fasts were ordered during the dearth of 1631-32, Bentham could only cite national fasts for 'removing and remitting some present pinching

⁸⁸ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.215, 273, 279.

⁸⁹ Lake, 'The Godly and their Enemies', p.156.

pressure and calamity' from the 1620s. The disquiet felt by moderate puritans at this policy was articulated by Montagu, who enquired of his brother in 1630 'why the council had not ordered public fasting and prayers to prevent these judgements'.⁹⁰ Bentham's argument that public fasts should be left in the hands of the magistrate was thus weakened by the reality of a political context in which conventional forms of Calvinist piety and collective repentance had become suspect in the eyes of the authorities. The author here unintentionally conceded ground to his opponents, who argued that the place of true piety in the commonwealth – and consequently the effective expression of Christian brotherly love in times of crisis – was being eroded by the ecclesiastical élite.⁹¹

Fasting and alms were not of course the only potential response to dearth. Bentham's sermon preached in February 1632 testifies to widespread disquiet over the desirability of market regulation and an increasing preference for transfer payments. The harvest year 1631-32 was in fact one of relative plenty across the nation as a whole, but barley – 'the poor man's bread corn' – was nevertheless being sold for over 6s a strike in Kettering.⁹² Bentham initially

⁹⁰ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.272; HMC, *Buccleuch*, III, p.352. The proclamation 'for preventing the dearth of Corne and Victuall' (September 1630) declared that fasting should take place only within households and other private institutions and was to be restricted to fish days, Ember days and Lent (J. Larkin and P. Hughes (eds.), *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Volume II, The Royal Proclamations of Charles I, 1625-1640* (Oxford, 1983), no.141, 298-304, esp. pp.301-02; Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 83. This proclamation had almost certainly been issued by the time Bentham preached on the theme and certainly by the time he published the treatise. The first publicly ordained fast outside the time of parliamentary sessions in Charles I's reign came late in 1636.

⁹¹ In 1630 the puritan Charles Chauncy commented that 'the Church hath power to appoint days for fasts and prayers but that they did not find the conscience but are indifferent' (Webster, *Godly Clergy*, p.69).

⁹² C.J. Harrison, 'Grain, Price Analysis, and Harvest Qualities, 1465-1634', *AgHR* 19 (1971), Appendix I, 151; B. Outhwaite, 'Dearth and Government Intervention in English Grain Markets, 1590-1700', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 33:4 (1981), 393, 404. This price is difficult to contextualise without knowing whether or not Northamptonshire was using standard measures. However, if we assume that a strike was identical with a bushel and that a bushel was one eighth of a quarter (*OED*, XVI, p.906) then the price of barley here was around three times that sold in Laughton, Sussex, in March 1633 (N.S.B. Gras, *The Evolution of the English Corn Market from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1915), p.404).

reiterated the rhetoric of the earlier dearth programme, with its emphasis on the provision of markets. He offered an attack not unlike that of Charles Fitz-Geffry on rich farmers who ‘bend their forces by ingrossing of corne to make greater the price’. Where Fitz-Geffry’s concern was the ‘charitable selling’ of corn, however, for Bentham, charity lay chiefly in providing the poor with properly remunerated employment:

And that which adds the greatest burden of misery upon these miserable, of dolours upon these distressed men is wante of worke, of imployment. For although a man could sell at a deare rate and buy at a low price; yet wanting things saleable, and not having money to buy things vendible; he is not at all benefited by these assisting advantages. I thinke it farre better for a poore man to pay 5 s for a strike of corne, having worke to get the same: then to have liberty to buy the selfe-same corne for 5 d, not knowing how to procure that 5 d to purchase the same.⁹³

Centrally regulated price-fixing and the selling of grain at under-prices to the poor were simply not appropriate to local circumstances. Moreover, the selling of corn to the poor in their homes would encourage their withdrawal as consumers from the open market, thus threatening the profitability of the arable farming undertaken by Bentham’s godly supporters in Weekley. Similarly, a market price kept artificially low would damage the economic prospects for these local farmers. Bentham’s proposed solution, however, was merely a generalised appeal to his audience to give ‘the able and working poore labour and imployment’. This he combined with a brief condemnation of those who forced poor men ‘to

⁹³ Fitz-Geffry, *The curse of corne-horders*; Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.123-24, 126-27.

part with their commodities at such low and under rates, that they may be said rather to give away, then sell the fruites of their labour'.⁹⁴

The reader of this passage may have been left with the feeling that there were unsatisfactory silences in Bentham's explanation of dearth. Who was to blame for the lack of employment and oppressive terms of trade in the county? Why, furthermore, was the price of grain so high in Kettering market after a generally good harvest? The impression that Bentham was consciously offering only a partial picture is confirmed by a glance at his manuscript life of Montagu. Here it is enclosure and its supporters that are held responsible for the 'decaying of employments' and for forcing men into poorly remunerated piecework, where they were at the mercy of 'these men who cry up trading' and 'rayse themselves upon such poore peoples ruines'. Enclosure was also mentioned as a direct cause of dearth in a later section of *The Christian conflict*, where depopulators were accused of 'Procuring upon every scarcity and scantnesse dearth and penury'. But this popular linkage was silenced in the earlier section of the text. Part of the explanation for this may rest on a combination of time and place: Kettering men had been among the leaders of the Midland Rising during the dearth of 1607. The continuation of high prices following the poor harvests of 1629-30 doubtless prompted men of Bentham's standing to fear the consequences of this legacy of collective action. Bentham's awareness of the spectre of rebellion at this time is suggested by his exhortation to the poor themselves to resist the temptation 'to dishonour the Lord by lying, stealing, railing, reviling, murmuring, and distrust'.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.126-27.

⁹⁵ NRO Montagu MS 186, pp.22-23; Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.133, 318.

IV.ii. In Defence of Tillage

Increasing the likelihood of dearth was only one of the many crimes against king, church and commonwealth of which enclosers were accused. Bentham's most detailed critique of enclosure comes towards the end of *The Christian conflict* and was constructed after he had taken up residence in Broughton. His long list of charges against 'those savaging supplanters of the solacing societies of mankind' adopted many of the features – including a fondness for striking alliteration and earthy polemic– of an older tradition of agrarian complaint. We are thus presented with the familiar image of 'harmelesse sheepe . . . devour[ing] men, houses and townes' or of 'active and able men' turned 'pilferers and way-bearers'. Perhaps the most striking thematic resonance is the idealisation of the agrarian independence that can be found in Bentham's critique of engrossing. The racking of rents forced many to abandon the employments to which 'they have beene apted and fitted, and in which they have been trained up from their youth' and to become 'but uncomfortable drudges for other men'. Such villages, which had once contained many men capable of offering 'hospitality and reliefe to poore people', were now dominated by 'but one house . . . for diverse livings'.⁹⁶ Bentham aped the style of Latimer and others in his claims to have directly observed these miseries. 'I know my self', he affirmed, one 'who in old age wanting imployment hath beene forced to forsake the plough by meanes of such ingurgitating ingrossers'. He also drew explicitly on local testimonies of change, citing the avowal of an 'ancient credible man' in a 'neighbouring

⁹⁶ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.325, 327. For the privy council's recognition of the continuing importance of yeoman hospitality to rural communities see Hindle, 'Dearth, Fasting and Alms', 86.

decayed inclosed towne' that, in his youth, twenty farmers 'did constantly keep as good houses and hospitality as he who after ruined himselfe and the towne'. Enclosure, Bentham intimated in a marginal note, also had an effect on the ministry: 'The Clerk of a neighbouring town inclosed told mee, that his wages are ten groats yearely lesse than it was in very few years'.⁹⁷

Whilst it may have been reminiscent of an earlier discourse, this personalised idiom also helped place Bentham's critique in a specific place and time. Unlike the London-based commonwealthsmen, Bentham could present himself as a direct participant in the ongoing struggles over agrarian change, contrasting his view of 'the town wherein I live' with the experience of 'both our depopulated neighbouring townes'. His text therefore assumes the posture of an uncompromising attack on the 'polishing and plausible, yet preposterous pretexts and pretences' of enclosers, combined with an impassioned defence of 'champion' farming. Bentham explicitly recognised the effects of the passing years on the collective 'mental map' of enclosure – 'I know that continuance of time hath skinned the skarre and healed the scab so that we see what they are, not what they were formerly, farre more populous than now they be' – and part of his agenda was thus to develop and elaborate a traditional moralised narrative of the decay and destruction of both enclosed Lordships and their perpetrators.⁹⁸ At the same time, he implicitly perceived the need to take on the pro-enclosure arguments in their own terms and to confront directly the increasing criticisms of

⁹⁷ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.319, 323, 327. The 'ancient credible man' who remembered an unenclosed parish in his youth might well have been a resident of Pytchley, which had been enclosed around thirty years previously. The 'clerk' was likely to have been Leonard Pattinson, vicar of Cransley from 1585 to 1636, whose stipend was originally around £12. This had apparently decreased by 1642 to only £8 (Bridges, II, p.91; *VCH Northants*, IV, pp.163, 167).

⁹⁸ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.319, 321. For the image of 'mental maps' of enclosure see Walter, 'The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596', 109.

open field farming. In his defence of tillage he thus incorporated and appropriated the language of profit and 'commodity' and, in the process, hinted that the pursuit of private interest was as much a structural feature of these communities as it was of the 'depopulated' parishes.

We shall return below to the meaning of, and motivation behind, Bentham's naming and shaming of particular enclosers. In considering first how Bentham updated the moral imperatives of complaint, our attention is drawn to an earlier passage. Enclosers were accused of being a 'plague and pest to the common-wealth' in part for their

Furthering whoredome and uncleannesse, for people multiplying, and habitations decaying, diverse people who would cannot live in lawfull wedlocke, and so the land is polluted with sin, and too much peopled with base and bastardly slips.⁹⁹

Whilst this represents a 'typically' puritan concern with the moral implications of a perceived rise in illegitimacy, it is also an explicit acknowledgement that this rise was not necessarily due to the moral failings of the poor. The use of the word 'cannot' is ambiguous, since it is unclear whether poor couples were *choosing* not to marry or were being *prevented* from doing so. Certainly pauper marriage was subject to increasing regulation in the parishes of early seventeenth-century England and Broughton itself may well have had to contend with this problem. Young men who had found it impossible to marry and settle down led the abortive Oxfordshire Rising of 1596 and men with a similar social profile may also have been among the participants of the Midland Rising.¹⁰⁰ Neither this

⁹⁹ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.318.

¹⁰⁰ S. Hindle, 'The Problem of Pauper Marriage in Seventeenth-century England' (The Alexander Prize Essay), *TRHS* 6th ser. 8 (1998), 78-81; Walter, 'The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596', 123-25.

concern with 'whoredome' nor the despair at the decay of yeoman hospitality surface in the brief discussion of depopulation found in *The societie of the saints*.¹⁰¹ We might thus detect in Bentham's criticism here a readjustment of his moral priorities in dialogue not only with broader intellectual and economic changes but also with the demographic structures and pressures that characterised the parish of which he had become rector.

At various points in the text, Bentham declared his resistance to some of the linguistic and conceptual compromises that were being made to accommodate economic change. In response to enclosers who 'pretend a good to the common-wealth, not intending to depopulate or destroy tillage, but onely to improve their lands to the tenants advantage', he insisted on the inevitable domino effect of agrarian change, so that 'inclosing is commonly the mother of depopulation'.¹⁰² In the same context, he refused to accept that a heightened sense of propriety over the commons necessarily resulted in increased prosperity. The pounding of a farmer's cattle 'into his proper pen' was unlikely to 'be to [his] enriching', '[i]t being easier to dine many at one table together, than fewer severally and by themselves'. This concern with the farmer's 'enriching', however, hints at points of contact between Bentham's social vision and the views of his alleged opponents. The existence of these points of contact becomes even clearer when we turn to Bentham's response to the specific criticisms of open field farming. The image offered by the pro-enclosure tracts was of bleak, disease-ridden champion districts in which rich farmers prayed upon the commons of their poor neighbours yet themselves remained poorer than their

¹⁰¹ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, pp.67, 99.

¹⁰² Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.326. For the government's expression of this sentiment in 1631 see above, Introduction, p.10.

counterparts in enclosed villages. Bentham presented a contrasting picture of 'champion townes' that were 'abundantly more commodious to the commonwealth', not only in 'maintaining and imploying multitudes of families', but also in the 'profit' gained from their many orchards and in their 'abundance of corn' produced on fields 'well dreyned and dressed with plough and spade'.¹⁰³

Despite his expression of commitment to collective farming of the commons, Bentham nevertheless hinted at how open field parishes like Broughton (and to some extent Weekley) created space for the pursuit of individual profit. Whilst he decried the existence of 'husbandmen turned cottagers or shepheards', he also boasted that Broughton 'hath more shepheards in the same than both our depopulated neighbouring townes'. In this way, the auditor or reader is quietly reminded that the more substantial farmers in mixed farming areas were capable of exploiting the profitable commodity of sheep.¹⁰⁴ Bentham's ambivalence towards the development of commercial farming is also confirmed by his answer to criticism of the 'unmercifull and uncharitable' encroachments of richer farmers on the commons. In commenting that poore men [are not] oppressed so by rich men, but that they have their bit, or money for the same' Bentham exposed the realities of social differentiation beneath the veneer of social harmony.¹⁰⁵ Larger farmers needed to expand their holdings and the poor were obliged to accept the compensation or manorial court fine they were offered in return for relinquishing part of their common rights. In this connection, it seems somewhat simplistic to describe Bentham as a 'defender of the poor'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.319-20, 325-26.

¹⁰⁴ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.319, 321. Cf. *The societie of the saints*, p.67: 'the tilled towne . . . affords imployment to as many if not more shepheards then the same inclosed'.

¹⁰⁵ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.321.

¹⁰⁶ Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, p.69.

His consciousness of the priorities of commercial farming is suggested both here and in his focus on the ‘continuall commerce with all sorts of bordering neighbours’ that was made possible by the well-kept highways in open field regions. He was keen to point out, moreover, that the ease of passage afforded by the balks on the open fields was not at all ‘prejudiciall to the owner’.¹⁰⁷

As rector and thus recipient of corn tithes, it is likely that Bentham had a more consuming fear than any of his fellow parishioners of enclosure resulting in conversion to pasture. As a ‘new man’ in the parish, with glebe land scattered throughout the common fields, he had every reason to think that he was unlikely to benefit from enclosure in any form. It is possible that Bentham consciously combined the discourse of agrarian complaint – including its emotive imagery of parishes destroyed by conversion to pasture – with aspects of a more rational, analytical idiom, in order to present the strongest possible case against enclosure to any of Broughton’s inhabitants who heard his sermon or read his treatise. In this way, the text may be read as an attempt to influence the future conduct of the wealthier landowners in Bentham’s parish as well as a construction of present practice.

IV.iii. ‘The Disasterous and Dreadfull Judgements of God’

As part of his warning against enclosure, Bentham provided a semi-anonymised list of ‘insatiable minded’ enclosers, who had suffered the ‘disasterous and dreadfull judgements of God’. In so doing, he came tantalisingly close to the persona of the satirist. By prudently offering only the initials of names and places, however, he created a problem of interpretation for both contemporaries

¹⁰⁷ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.323-24.

and historians. What is the key to unlocking his code? The fact that Bentham's discussion up to this point is set within the boundaries of the county may well have encouraged the reader to identify the initials given here with well-known enclosures in Northamptonshire. If this was indeed the case, the list would have held particular significance for those familiar with the local environment, whether they encountered it in a preached or written form. The assumption that Bentham did indeed construct this list purely from Northamptonshire landowners, whilst impossible to prove, nevertheless seems a reasonable enough basis on which to attempt a full identification of the people and places named. At first sight, we appear to be presented with a random catalogue of some of the county's most notorious enclosers and the names of the 'townes [which] have vomited out and unburdened themselves of their former desolating and depopulating owners'.¹⁰⁸ Five of the named men had been prosecuted following the Midland Rising: Sir Euseby Isham ('P[ytchley] inclosed by S.E.I. '); Mr John Reade ('C[ottesbrooke] inclosed by M.R. '); Sir Robert Osborne ('K[elmarsh] inclosed by S.R.O. '); William Saunders ('H[addon East] inclosed by M.S. '); and Lewis Atterbury ('H[oughton Magna] inclosed by M.A. ').¹⁰⁹ All the lordships in question, apart from Kelmarsh, had been sold by these landowners or their heirs by the time Bentham published his treatise in 1635. Osborne – popularly mocked for his effeminacy – was to die without a son four years later.¹¹⁰ Two further examples on the list were drawn from earlier enclosures near Broughton. 'W

¹⁰⁸ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.322.

¹⁰⁹ For a corroboration of the identification of Isham, Reade, Osborne and Saunders see J.E. Martin, 'Peasant and Landlord in the Development of Feudalism and Transition to Capitalism in England' (University of Lancaster Ph.D. Thesis, 1979), p.384. For the prosecutions of these men and the pardon granted to Robert Osborne see NRO NPL 2127; PRO STAC 8/8/12; E 163/17/8; NRO Pardon BH (K) 215, Martin, 'Enclosure and the Inquisitions of 1607', 43.

¹¹⁰ A.O. Barron, *Northamptonshire Families*, (2 vols., London, 1906), II, p.148; *VCH Northants*, IV, p.211 [Isham]; Bridges, I, p.554 [Reade]; Bridges, I, pp.504-05 [Saunders]; Bridges, I, pp.370-71 [Atterbury]. Bridges, II, p.40; BL Add. MS.5832, fol.204' [Osborne].

inclosed by M.L.' may well translate as 'Walgrave enclosed by Mr Lane'. Both John Lane and his nephew William were responsible for the enclosure of around 350 acres here by the 1590s.¹¹¹ In the early 1580s, Cransley ('C') was being enclosed and partly converted to pasture by Mr Edward Barnwell ('M.E.B.') and Mr Edward Dallison ('M.E.D.').¹¹² A picture begins to form of Bentham plundering local memory for the most prominent and proximate enclosers whose fate could serve as a generalised warning to other landowners.

The absence of one prominent target of the 1607 rioters, however, suggests that Bentham was applying other principles of selection in formulating his list. Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton was not only an infamous encloser but also in terminal economic decline: his Rushton estates were sold to an upstart merchant in 1613 and the whole family was ruined by 1643.¹¹³ It is highly likely that Bentham would have known something of this, given Rushton's proximity to Weekley and Tresham's place in the collective consciousness of the county. Tresham was excluded from the list, however, because he was a Catholic and therefore so far outside the boundaries of the godly community as to be unable to play a part in its definition and defence. As religious divisions within this community intensified, moreover, moderate puritans such as Bentham tended to focus on the rather vague category of the 'profane' rather than the highly-charged polemic of 'popery'. Thus the godly's enemies at the grassroots, according to Bentham, were the 'men of *Belial*', 'Sathans revellers' and 'luke-warme

¹¹¹ D. Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (NRS 38, Northampton, 1995), p.355; Bridges, II, p.127; NRO NPL 47. The manor passed to William Saunders of Harrington in 1578.

¹¹² Bridges, II, pp.90-91; Finch, *Five Northamptonshire Families*, pp.75n, p.114; *VCH Northants*, IV, pp.164-65. Dallison's manor in Cransley was conveyed to Sir Thomas Cecil of Burghley (later Earl of Exeter) in 1585 but it had apparently been sold to Giles Barnwell, Edward's nephew, at an earlier date. In 1586 Barnwell's three manors were conveyed to Cecil and Boniface Pickering.

¹¹³ Finch, *Five Northamptonshire Families*, pp.96-99.

Christians' who mocked and jeered at the godly for their 'too too unnecessary precisenesse'.¹¹⁴ Because the ungodly were so quick to condemn all true professors on the basis of the 'many enormous, and unorderedly deeds' of a few hypocrites, self-regulation was essential. It was the saints' duty to pull the 'masking robes and sheeps-clothing' from 'disguised miscreants' and only they had the divine authority to determine which 'formall professors' really belonged amongst the ungodly 'other'.¹¹⁵ In this section of *The Christian conflict*, therefore, Bentham projected the sin of enclosure not only onto those known to be hostile or indifferent to the godly cause but also onto men associated with a rival vision of godliness to his own 'moderate' worldview. The list was also constructed with an eye to strengthening both the political position and personal resolve of the chief lay exponent of moderation: Bentham's patron, Lord Montagu.

Local testimony contained in marginal notes was used to confirm the profanity of some of Bentham's targets. He recounted an anecdote from 'M.F.H. a Preacher' which showed John Reade to be an 'irreligious and besotted Mammonist': On being told that he would go to the devil for enclosing, Reade replied, 'If I do, I shall go for as good ground as is in England'. Edward Dallison – despite a reputation for the support for the godly clergy – had also apparently ignored an earlier providential sign of the judgements that would be visited upon him if he proceeded with his enclosure. A more open opponent of the county's godly faction, and of Montagu in particular, was Sir Francis Fane ('S.F.F.'), who

¹¹⁴ Bentham, *The societie of the saints*, p.18; *The Christian conflict*, p.55. Bentham's writing is not of course entirely free of vitriol against popish 'errors'. Cf., for example, a passage in a chapter on 'erroneous opinions' against 'the massie mists of the damnable darknesse of Popish pestiferous superstitions' (*The Christian conflict*, p.113).

¹¹⁵ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.3, 61; *The societie of the saints*, p.26.

died in 1629 at the age of only 49. The 'two R. and H.', may be identified as part of Rockingham Forest and Hale, which formed a proportion of Fane's estates at Apethorpe and where imparkment had taken place in the 1620s.¹¹⁶

Other names on the list, however, were more closely linked to Sibthorpe's '*Rebellio Puritanica*' or the committed fight in favour of the practices and practitioners of godly religion. Sir Euseby Andrews ('S.E.A.') was one of the more radical lay supporters of puritanism at the turn of the century. Bentham claimed Andrews had suffered for his depopulation of 'W', which can be identified as the lordship of Winwick. Andrews had overseen the enclosure here in around 1607, and had also enclosed part of his estate at Charwelton. The fate of these lands is unclear but Andrews himself was certainly satirised for his 'fall to Beggerye' in the early seventeenth century.¹¹⁷ The most prominent landowner fighting the cause of puritan opposition in the 1630s was Richard Knightley. 'L inclosed by M.K.' quite possibly refers to the enclosure of Little Preston by Richard's father Edward in the late sixteenth century. By the time of Richard's majority in 1614, the lands he inherited in Little Preston had been reorganised into three large pastures, through a process of exchange, purchase and conversion. The proverbial wisdom that the covetous sins of the father were visited on his progeny prophesied a bleak future for Richard Knightley himself. 'I take it for granted', Bentham declared, 'that the actors in this tragedy or their heires are or will be forced through want and penury to forsake the stage and

¹¹⁶ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.317; Barron, *Northamptonshire Families*, I, p.97; K.J. Allison, M.W. Beresford, J.G. Hurst, *The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire* (Department of English Local History Occasional Papers 18, Leicester, 1966), p.41; Bridges, II, pp.460-61; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, p.11. The deer park, known as the New or Great Park, was not formally licensed until 1642 (PRO E 214/413).

¹¹⁷ Bridges, I, p.604; Hall, *Open Fields*, p.364; NRO ZA 3631-3 [Winwick]; NRO YZ 45 41 [Charwelton]; G. Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton* (2 vols., London, 1822-41), I, p.295; BL Add. MS.5382, fo.204^r.

standing in which they have acted such tragicall parts'. In 1635, the same year as Bentham published *The Christian conflict*, Knightley sold the reversion of the manor of Little Preston to his half-brother, and he died without issue four years later.¹¹⁸

This section of the text thus reinforced a theme that underpinned Bentham's treatises: the compatibility of the pursuit of godliness with conformity to the 'things inconvenient' commanded by the church and with submission to the 'lawfull powers and ordinance of God'.¹¹⁹ Bentham's text helped to place Montagu at the centre of this version of godly community, but this passage also served as a 'vocal warning from the pulpit', intended to strengthen Montagu's desire to avoid any association with enclosure. The moralised narrative of the fate of depopulators was Bentham's ammunition against the competing discourses and 'worldly wise men' encouraging his patron to enclose.¹²⁰ This exhortation may even have been delivered to coincide with Montagu's involvement in the reorganisation of the Benefield wastes. That Bentham might have had this forest village in mind is suggested by his prefacing the catalogue of enclosers with a reference to William I's fateful depopulations in the 'New Forest in Hampshire'. The only name on Bentham's list that we have not yet accounted for was that of Montagu's cousin, Sir Robert Wingfield ('S.R.W.') of Upton ('U').¹²¹ In fact, Wingfield may have acted as a cipher for Montagu's brother Walter, who had been convicted of depopulation in the lordship of

¹¹⁸ Bridges, I, pp.80, 83; Hall, *Open Fields*, p.333; NRO K90, K95-99, K102, K94, K50(a); Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, p.325; Barron, *Northamptonshire Families*, II p.185.

¹¹⁹ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, pp.18, 264; *The societie of the saints*, pp.36-37.

¹²⁰ NRO Montagu MS 186, p.21. For evidence that moralised narratives of this kind could have an effect on landowners even in the mid-seventeenth century see W.H. Hosford, 'An Eye-witness Account of a Seventeenth-century Enclosure', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 4:2 (1951), 215-20.

¹²¹ This lordship had certainly been enclosed by 1649 at the latest (NRO ML 892) and in 1625 was sold by Sir Robert Wingfield's son to William Dove, in whose hands it remained until the eighteenth century (*VCH Northants*, II, p.484).

Hanging Houghton, and had died without issue in 1616.¹²² Whilst Bentham would not risk publicly associating the Montagu name with enclosure by naming Walter directly, he was nevertheless able to put Edward in mind of his brother's fate by naming another kinsman. The inclusion of some of the targets of the rioters of 1607 on this list, moreover, was a powerful reminder that the 'scandal' of enclosure could threaten both reputation and property, even before the perpetrator was inflicted with divine punishments.

In her study of seventeenth-century economic ideology, Joyce Appleby describes Bentham as one of the 'defenders of the poor' who struggled to shore up a moral economy that was essentially 'in retreat'.¹²³ This description certainly gives expression to one aspect of Bentham's authorial identity in his treatment of the themes of charity and enclosure. It nevertheless fails to express the variety of advocacy positions he adopted in these sections of his treatises. A brief discussion of each of these, with reference to the evidence we have gained from the foregoing analysis, reveals that Bentham did not simply recapitulate a static, one-dimensional understanding of the 'moral economy'. Rather, he allowed his vision to be transformed in dialogue with the broad social and political context of its construction.

The posture of 'poor man's advocate' gave Bentham's views on charity and enclosure their moral legitimacy and suggested a correspondence between his rhetoric and the priorities of the privy council when it came to policing

¹²² Cope, *Life of a Public Man*, pp.70, 72.

¹²³ Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, ch.3.

agrarian change. It was a persona to which Bentham therefore drew attention in the preface to *The Christian conflict*. The 'rash and uncharitable censures' that were to be expected even if he had 'medled with none, or onely meane men' would multiply because he had been prepared to speak out against usurers and depopulators, the 'very devourers of our common-wealth'.¹²⁴ The force of his 'compassionate' voice in the context of dearth may have been tempered by its being derived *verbatim* from an ancient text but the use of this idiom nevertheless allowed him to lay bare the inadequacy of market regulation and the necessity of transfer payments. The emotive imagery used in connection with enclosure not only drew attention to a legacy of oppression but also put the future activities of the powerful up for public scrutiny. Even the concern over unmarried paupers could be interpreted on one level as a means of drawing attention to the harassment they faced at the hands of parish notables. Bentham was no advocate of 'levelling' and had an avowed distaste for 'popularity' but his treatise nevertheless has points of contact with plebeian critiques of enclosure. Both drew on a 'public transcript' that continued to promote genuine fear over the divine judgements that would fall on depopulators.¹²⁵

In his defence of tillage, however, Bentham was unable completely to displace the reality of social discord and potential oppression from his own parish. This fracture in his social vision stemmed in part from a need to engage with the interests of the 'middling sort' of farmer, as these were expressed in the burgeoning literature of 'improvement'. Bentham's interests, it has been argued, were distinct from the wealthiest of his parishioners in Broughton, but he

¹²⁴ Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, sig.A6^v ('To the Christian Reader').

¹²⁵ Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence', pp.132-33.

nevertheless recognised, and intermittently endorsed, the priorities and practices of these more substantial farmers. The terminology and legislative allusions through which Bentham framed his exhortations to charity, moreover, might have appealed to the ‘middling sort’ more generally – or to some potential ratepayers at least.

One aspect of Bentham’s moral economy that was unlikely to have gained much support among parish officers, however, was his fundamental opposition to ‘usury’ of any kind. In both his sermon at Weekley and in a long section against usury at the end of *The Christian conflict*, he insisted that the only legitimate means of gaining increase from money was through its investment in land. His own charitable bequests were administered in this way: by the time of his death in 1671, the rents of three separate farms in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire were providing annual annuities to the local poor. Bentham’s opposition to usury and qualified resistance to the commercial exploitation of land may thus be seen as manifestations of his support for the traditional values of a landed élite.¹²⁶ In his manuscript life of Montagu, however, Bentham inadvertently revealed the fractures in this worldview in an era of expanding commerce and population pressure. An implacable resistance to usury could only be maintained in practice through the purchase of land that had become available through agrarian reorganisation.¹²⁷

Underpinning these shifts in authorial identity was a consistent claim to be speaking for, and to, the community of the saints. Bentham strove to reconcile the practice and priorities of this community with the wider interests of the

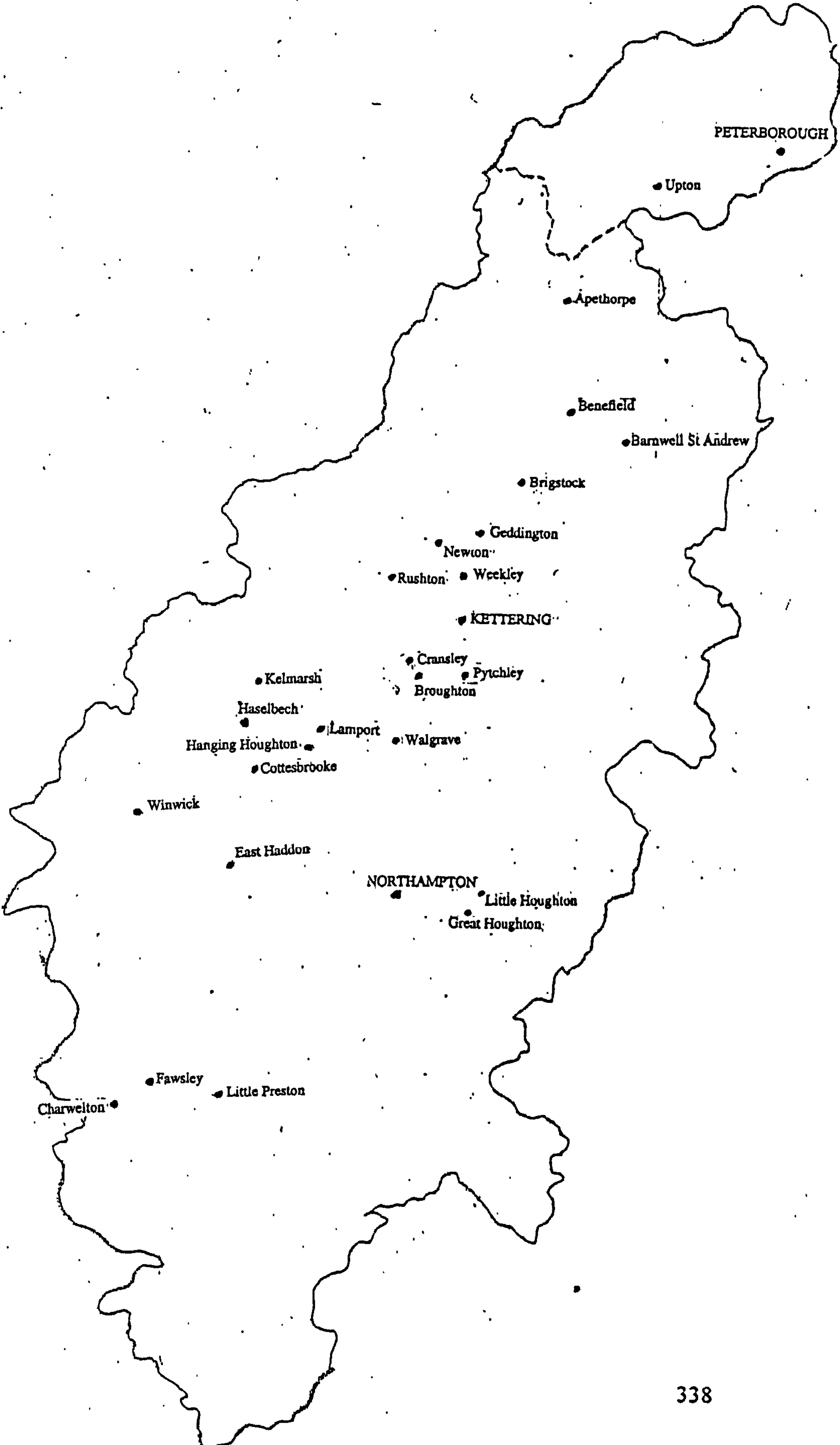
¹²⁶ NRO Transcription of Joseph Bentham’s Will (1671).

¹²⁷ See above, p.312.

common weal. Enclosers, who were 'pests to the commonwealth' were also therefore the enemies of the truly godly. But the identification of these enemies, along with the broader condemnation of strategies of 'popularity', exposed fractures within the community of the godly and made clear the impossibility of sustaining a 'moderate puritan' position in the late 1630s. In moulding his vision of the godly life to fit the current 'orthodoxy', Bentham drew attention to the Laudian suppression of some of the central features of puritan piety.

Like the other texts we have studied in detail, therefore, Bentham's treatises display both conscious and unconscious agency. His treatment of enclosure especially was formulated with the conscious aim of defending and constructing reputation and, in print at least, of causing offence to those who recognised themselves in his hall of infamy. But these texts, especially when read alongside Bentham's other writings, also expose the limitations in the coherence of his own critique. As a cultural construction of both political and economic change, therefore, they not only appropriated the rhetoric of the past to influence the immediate actions of particular individuals but also, in the long term, helped contemporaries to accommodate to shifting realities.

Map 3: Northamptonshire, showing places mentioned in the text



Conclusion

Despite the central place of preaching in the political and social fabric of post-Reformation England, it is only relatively recently that literary and historical scholars have begun to investigate the full historical meaning of these texts.¹ A tendency to view published sermons as an expression and consolidation of pre-existent conceptions of authority is thus being replaced by an awareness of the complex relationship these texts have with prevailing ideologies and their negotiation – or even construction – of the various contexts of power. It is hoped that the foregoing discussion has contributed to these developments in reading the English sermon, by drawing attention to the evolving and diverse constructions of a moral economy through the generic paradigm of ‘complaint’. The first chapter has offered a reinterpretation of the trajectory of clerical complaint and the emotive commonwealth rhetoric with which it became associated. Having identified complaint as a vibrant and multifaceted discourse of social and political criticism, the discussion then moved to consider how its themes and structures were variously adapted to a genre of ‘occasional’ preaching that flourished in concert with the development of a graduate clerical profession. These texts were seen to have been inflected with a motif of harmony and discord, a discursive feature which also resonates across the three case studies. The texts in these chapters were selected partly on the basis that they registered and fomented genuine disharmony, but that they did so in the name of

¹ See above, Introduction, pp.33–40.

‘charity’, ‘communion’ or ‘unity’. They were all preached in the region in which the author, an educated minister, carved out his identity both as pastor and as neighbour. The primary contexts with which their texts interacted were thus, it has been suggested, the particular manifestations of religious, political and economic changes within these local environments and the preacher’s experience of these.

Although much of the argument presented here has been concerned with texts from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the more familiar social criticism of the 1540s has also been re-examined. The commonwealthsmen’s desire to integrate social reform with comprehensive religious renewal, and to publicise this agenda through printed texts, transformed the traditional themes of medieval homilies into the raw material for a more radical social vision. There is a danger that in taking the mid-century literature of protest as its point of departure, this thesis has located an ‘authentic’ and uncompromised voice of complaint among the Edwardian gospellers. It is hoped that this has been offset by an appreciation of the ways in which these preachers adapted their expressions of moral outrage to their specific audiences, settings and priorities. The current study has also been intended as a contribution to the contextual study of these texts and in particular to an awareness of the transmission and appropriation of their *structures* as well as their *content*. The dichotomised configuration of social forces presented in the sermons of the commonwealthsmen was arguably as important a contribution to the strategies of popular protest as the imagery and nomenclature with which they were infused.

It has long been recognised that the sermons and tracts produced in the early years of the reformation represented the fusion of a tradition of native

protest with the humanist-inspired revival of classical models. There is marked continuity, it has been contended here, in both the thematic and the structural foundations of later complaint. In this sense, this thesis is sympathetic to historians such as Margo Todd and Martin Ingram, who have challenged the distinctiveness of puritan social thought and questioned the putative 'narrowing' of the critical agenda. Greater emphasis has been placed here, however, on the appropriation and adaptation of these themes and structures by later protestant clerics to form narratives of social experience which, whilst undeniably wanting as objective economic analysis, were nonetheless active agents in the discursive interpretation of economic change. The dualism of much early modern social thought undoubtedly inhibited its ability to comprehend complex economic change, but it was not impossible to adapt this configuration to changing circumstances. Calvinist treatises on charity, for example, transformed the meaning of the signifiers 'rich' and 'poor' to reflect a reconfiguration of social forces in the parishes and a re-evaluation of the household economy. It has not been the intention here to elide the connection between relatively rapid social change and a greater potential for the fracturing of moral consensus. Rather, the aim has been to explore ways in which clerical moralists who explicitly aligned themselves with traditional and enduring paradigms of social and political criticism exploited the flexibility of these paradigms.

The foregoing attempt to reveal and analyse previously unexplored meanings in clerical texts has been heavily focused on the ways in which 'occasional' sermons could destabilise the legitimisation behind, and configuration of, forms of political authority. A sustained effort has been made to consider how much of this criticism built on the prevailing ideological arguments

that structured 'orthodoxy' – in both its political and its theological forms. Thus the manipulation of the 'commonplace' illustrations of vice and virtue upon which orthodox learning was founded, could challenge or at least question ideological consensus rather than merely confirm this. Similarly, supposedly consensual ideals such as the duty of charity or the pairing of justice and mercy could in fact disguise controversy and discord. As far as religious doctrine is concerned, the ubiquitous *topos* of hypocrisy that stemmed from the orthodoxy of experimental Calvinist piety has been portrayed as a vehicle for the cultural interpretation of both economic and religious change.

'Orthodoxy' was subject, of course, to contradictory and competing interpretations.² Differences of emphasis and interpretation in some of these sermons articulate broader ideological discord regarding the origins and nature of political authority.³ Moreover, it has been suggested that some of the textual choices made by the preachers in the three case studies were shaped by an awareness of the highly contested nature of orthodoxy and 'moderation'. In the 1630s, when Laud and others were consciously turning up the heat on ecclesiological divisions and redefining puritanism as a euphemism for sedition, models of moderation were in danger of being seen as mere capitulation to an unholy regime. Foster's exhortations to Joseph Hall, it has been argued, sought to redefine the bishop's proclaimed 'moderation' as a dangerous adherence to new

² Braddick, *State Formation*, p.334.

³ For the most comprehensive analysis of 'rival' ideologies on the question of the limitations of monarchical power in early seventeenth century England see Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology*. Sommerville provides an important survey of currents in political thought both in England and on the Continent but the usefulness of his argument is limited by his insistence on dividing his selected political thinkers into rigid ideological camps. The complex and contradictory reality of political culture – and of the individual's appropriation of this – are therefore obscured. For criticism of Sommerville's position see G. Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought 1603-1642* (Basingstoke, 1992) and G. Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven and London, 1996).

ideas. Bentham consistently strove to define and defend his model of a puritan piety in tune with the aims of government, but even he could not disguise the discomfiting gaps in the expressions of piety licensed by the regime.

The foregoing chapters, particularly the case studies, have endorsed Andrew McRae's contention that 'the expansion of the pastoral and institutional networks of the Church placed individual members of the clergy within webs of local circumstances which would almost inevitably influence their statements'.⁴ Where this thesis dissents from McRae's analysis, however, is in its assessment of the impact of these 'webs', and of the clergyman's place within them, on the tone and content of sermons. In particular, the relationship to a powerful patron has been seen not merely as a constraining force on the minister's critical capacities but rather as a means of legitimising more forthright criticism of other gentry. The evidence presented in this thesis, furthermore, suggests that rather than lacking 'any motivation to apply to agrarian practices the gossellers' moral fundamentalism', a substantial number of preachers were keen to adopt a similar persona to their mid-Tudor forbears.⁵ Of course, this advocacy of the 'poor man's cause' or the claim to speak on behalf of the 'common good' was compromised by the presence of self-interest and the articulation of the priorities of hierarchical social order, with its implied social violence against the poor and dispossessed.⁶ The ubiquity of this social violence was expressed in Bentham's writings, for example, by the failure to confine its perpetration and effects to the 'enemies' of the commonwealth. None of the preachers we have cited here explicitly acknowledged that the acquisitive characteristics they projected onto

⁴ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.69.

⁵ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p.70.

⁶ D. Levine, 'The Violence of the Status Quo', *JBS* 41:4 (October 2002), 511-19.

recognisable synecdoches were increasingly a fact of life for themselves and many of their brethren, or that the dichotomised structures with which they worked were inherently unstable. At moments in their texts, however, these discursive limitations are implicitly revealed.

Whilst it would therefore be overly simplistic to characterise these preachers as the 'authentic' voice of the dispossessed or as 'defenders of the poor', it has nevertheless been argued that they exhibit points of contact with various strands of popular protest against the distribution and use of wealth and power. John Walter has offered important insights into the manipulation in petitions and libels of a 'public transcript' that demanded respect from those in authority for the 'rights' of the poor and the weak. The place of the pulpit in the transmission of this transcript – and its uncertain relationship to the 'hidden transcript' of collective action – reminds us that criticisms from the pulpit need to be placed within a broader framework of political communication. The texts within this framework ranged on a scale from the orthodox sermon publicly sanctioned by authority to the seditious libel cast into the church pew.⁷ What the sermons of preachers such as Hall, Sanderson and Hausted demonstrate, is that even the most orthodox of texts could reveal the weaknesses and inconsistencies in the ideologies of power. It was in the illegitimate genres of satire or libel that these tensions and the personal hypocrisies through which they were expressed could be explored more openly.

Prior to the relaxation of censorship in the 1640s, published sermons could not be openly critical of individuals in places of authority. The examples cited here nevertheless bear witness to the variety of ways in which the

⁷ Walter, 'Politics of Subsistence'.

relationship between clerical and secular authority and between the persons of the magistrate and minister were negotiated. The stranglehold of the laity over church resources remained an unresolved grievance in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sermons and tracts. The immiserating effects of this were linked by preachers such as Carter to human failings rather than systemic injustice, but even this judicious separation of the 'dross' from the 'silver' was forced by its own logic to give way to a broader critique of gentry power. This criticism was facilitated in part by Carter's description of the affective relationship between himself and his patron. Both he and Bentham clothed their dependence on a powerful laymen in the rhetoric of friendship and mutual love. This device not only helped them to come to terms with their own dependence but also, in Bentham's case, accounted for his self-proclaimed place as chief moral advisor to Lord Montagu. Whilst both these preachers might appear to be classic examples of 'lay-controlled clerics', therefore, this by no means rendered them impotent or uninteresting social critics.⁸ The question of lay control is in fact germane to all three case studies. The conflict between Foster and his most powerful parishioner, which inflected the rhetoric and priorities of his assize sermon, was provoked by the minister's independence from this local magistrate. This is not to say that Foster became a champion of unchecked clerical authority. The contrast between his own situation and that of others in his profession helped shape his attack on the overweening power of Cathedral clergy and the subtle boost he gave to the rival authority of the city corporation.

Foster was one of several assize preachers who used the prestige of the occasion to publicise the corruption and deficiencies of local magistrates and

⁸ J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), pp.169-70.

clergy. He also exploited the tensions within the local ecclesiastical hierarchy and the recent assaults on Hall's reputation to offer his own vision of the proper exercise of episcopal authority. In using their sermons to forge and disseminate the reputation of powerful individuals, preachers implicitly shifted the responsibility of judgement onto a wider community. Despite the development of complex narratives of personal repentance, therefore, puritan theologians did not effect a complete removal of 'the centre of moral judgement from the community to the individual conscience'.⁹ Of course, the godly reserved the privilege of judgement – of themselves and of others – to the self-selecting community of the saints, but many of them nevertheless urged their audiences to interrogate both the extent of, and motivation behind, protestant works of charity. Carter's and Bentham's sermons, like most stipendiary and combination lectures, were preached on a market day and were thus associated with the 'closest institution early modern society had which offered some regularity for the exchange of public information'.¹⁰ Like the informal speech between buyer and seller in the marketplace, therefore, these sermons could be an influential means of communicating 'credit' for public consumption and transmission. Few of the sermons we have considered here named individuals directly but several exploited their location and setting, exegetical and etymological ambiguities, or their audience's understanding of the rhetorical techniques through which criticism was communicated, in order to deliver a particularly censorious message. In this way, the commonplaces of social and political thought might be creatively transformed in an individual text to fit its perceived polemical and

⁹ Jones, *God and the Moneylenders*, p.174.

¹⁰ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, p.42.

pastoral function. Whether or not, therefore, the pulpits of seventeenth-century England were really full of 'sterne spirited Saturists' disguising their venom as 'domesticall Sermons', it is clear that the two personae of earthly satyr and divine ambassador might co-exist within the boundaries of a single text.¹¹ In this connection it is worth remembering that a number of clergymen doubled as lawyers, playwrights, satirists or poets and therefore had access to a wide range of rhetorical strategies and satirical techniques which might interpenetrate one another.

A 'vocal warning from the pulpit', therefore, was one means by which preachers could exercise some power over social superiors and at the same time publicly affirm their autonomy as religious moralists. It was also, however, a vehicle for the articulation of the shared values produced by the interconnectedness of secular and religious authority. This harmonious ideal is of course the reason behind the existence of the 'occasional' sermons that increasingly found their way to the printing press in this period. The discourse of order and uniformity that united church and state was, however, inherently unstable. Concepts of order embraced the ideal of harmonious social relations and the fulfilment of paternalistic duties as well as the punishment of idleness and disobedience. The defence of hierarchy was counterbalanced by the language of 'solidarity' and natural equality, which theoretically strengthened the claims of the poor to the charity that was their 'due'. Most importantly, the concept at the very heart of the legitimation and growth of the state could become a source for the most damning of criticism. The interconnection of 'social' and 'political' power sustained a patriarchal state with few powers of enforcement and a

¹¹ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, p.334.

dependence on consensus. Yet many of these sermons reveal how a skilful preacher might reconfigure even the ideal 'public man', self-consciously performing his paternalistic duties as both landlord and magistrate, to represent merely one more party to a 'conspiracy of the rich'.

Appendix: Published Assize Sermons Preached between c.1579 and 1640

General note

The following appendix lists all the surviving published assize sermons, to the best of the present author's knowledge, delivered between c.1579 and 1640. The list is arranged alphabetically by author, for ease of reference.

The intention of this appendix is to offer an overview of the assize sermons that went to print in this period, and to bring to light the variety in expository texts and dedicatees. Brief details of the author's publishing history and clerical career are provided to suggest something of the range in status among assize preachers. Most were beneficed ministers when their first published assize sermon was preached. They might have been at a relatively early stage in their careers but some had certainly already publicised their preaching abilities in a local lecture or at Paul's Cross. Of course, the first *published* assize sermon does not necessarily equate to the first *preached* assize sermon. An assize sermon was often, however, one of the earliest – and sometimes the only – work in an author's published oeuvre, suggesting an awareness of the market for these guides to governance.

Column A: Author

- The dates of the author's birth and death (if known) are given here. These are extracted from *STC*, unless suffixed with *Alum*, in which case *Alumni Cantab* or *Alumni Oxon* has been used to calculate the author's date of birth.

Column B: Title and Text

- The full title of each sermon is given in the bibliography. Sermons preached on separate occasions by the same author have been listed separately, even if they were published together, in order to give a more accurate idea of the number of surviving printed sermons.
- *STC* and Wing numbers refer to the second editions (see above, List of Abbreviations).
- The following expository texts are used by more than one author in the list [quoting from the Authorised Version of the Bible]:
 1. Psalms 2:10-11: 'Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling'
 2. Psalms 82:6-7: 'I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes'
 3. John 7:51: 'Doth our law judge any man, before it heare him, and know what he doeth?'

4. Deuteronomy 1:16-17: ‘And I charged your Judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but you shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is Gods: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it’
5. Ezra 7:26: ‘And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment’
6. Exodus 18:21: ‘Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens’
7. 2.Chronicles 19:5-6: ‘And he set the judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in judgment’

Columns F and G: Number of publications

- The number and dates of published works refer to first editions only, but include collections and *attributed [attr.]works*
- As far as possible, an attempt has been made to trace the publishing record of the authors before and after their first printed assize sermon was *preached* rather than *published*. If the date of the sermon’s delivery is not known, then

the future publication record is traced from the date of the first assize sermon's publication. Where the year of preaching and publication differ, the assize sermon is only considered in the tally for column G if it was published in a collection with other sermons preached elsewhere.

Column H: Career and occasional preaching

- The following abbreviations are used, with dates where known:

Arch	Archdeacon
B	Bishop
BC	Bishop's chaplain
Cantab	Cantabrigienses (of Cambridge University)
Cou	Known to have preached at Court
Fel Cantab	Cambridge College Fellow
Fel Oxon	Oxford College Fellow
GC	Gentelman's chaplain
Lec	Known to have preached at a Combination Lecture
Oxon	Oxonienses (of Oxford University)
P	[Town] Preacher
PCr	Known to have preached at Paul's Cross
Preb	Prebendary
R	Rector
RC	Royal Chaplain

- Except where indicated by (publ.) the date for occasional sermons is the date of their being preached.
- Only the date of presentation to the first parochial benefice (rectory or vicarage) is noted.
- Only the highest degree university degree obtained is noted, except where this is DD, where the date of proceeding BD or MA is also given.

A. Author	B. Short title & expository text	C. Date & place preached	D. Date published	E. Dedicatee. With notes of status or relationship to author	F. No. of works published <u>before</u> first published assize sermon preached	G. No. of works published <u>after</u> first published assize sermon preached	H. Notes on career & 'occasional' preaching
1. Bolton, Robert (1572-1631)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'An assize sermon' Proverbs 29:2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1621 Northampton 	1635 in <i>Two sermons</i> [STC 3256] (2 nd edn. in 1639)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	1 (1611)	12 (1625-41)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Oxon 1609 R 1609 PCr (publ.1611) Lec (publ. 1625, 1631)
2. Bolton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A second assize sermon' Proverbs 29:2 (cont.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1629 Northampton 	1635 in <i>Two sermons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
3. Bolton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A sermon Preached at Lent assizes' [STC 3244] 1. Corinthians 1:26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1630 or 1631 Northampton 	1632 as part of <i>Mr Boltons last and learned worke of the foure last things</i> (Further edns. in 1633, 1635 & 1639)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
4. Bourne, Immanuel 1590-1672	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The anatomie of conscience</i>) [STC 3416] Revelation 20:12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1622 or 1623 Derby 	1623	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Williams Bishop of Lincoln. Bourne his chaplain 	3 (1617-22)	4 (1645-69)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1621 R 1622 P PCr (2 in 1617, 1 in 1619)

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5. Browne, Abraham (d. c.1625)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sermon preached at the assizes [STC 3906] Psalms 50:23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 February 1622/3 Winchester 	1623	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Laurence Tanfield & Sir Richard Hutton Assize judges 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Oxon 1576 V 1581 Canon (Preb) 1581
6. Burton, Samuel (1568 or 69-1634)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sermon preached at the general assizes [STC 4164] Romans 13:4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 March 1619/20 Warwick 	1620	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Oxon 1591 R 1594 Arch 1607
7. Bury, John (1580-1667)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schole of godly feare 1.Peter 1:17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 March 1614/5 Exeter 	1615	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Henry Hobart & Sir Laurence Tanfield Assize judges 	0	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Oxon 1643 Canon 1632 Fel Oxon Vis (1631)
8. Cade, Anthony (1564?-1641)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sermon of the nature of conscience [STC 4180.5] Matthew 27:3-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 July 1620 Leicester 	1621	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Henry Hobart & Sir Edward Bromley Assize judges 	1 (1618)	3 (1630-31)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Oxon 1607 R 1597 Lec (publ.1618) Vis (publ.1636)

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9. Daves, Lancelot (1580-1653)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Two sermons preached at the assises</i> [STC 6389] ▪ Matthew 26:15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unknown ▪ Carlisle 	1614	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Henry Robinson ▪ Bishop of Carlisle 	1 (1608) [prior to publication]	2 (1652-53)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Oxon 1605 (DD later) ▪ V 1608 ▪ PCr (1609)
10. Daves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above ▪ Psalms 82:6-7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1614 ▪ Carlisle 	1614	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above
11. Dickinson, William (b.1584 or 85)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The kings right</i> [STC 6821] ▪ Psalms 75:7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 28 June 1619 ▪ Reading (Berks.) 	1619	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ William Earl of Pembroke ▪ Dickinson his chaplain 	0	1 (1628)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BD Oxon 1619 ▪ Fel Oxon ▪ R 1619
12. Drant, Thomas (b. 1601 or 02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The royall guest</i> [STC 7165.3] ▪ Revelation 3:20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lent 1636 ▪ Sarum (Wilts.) 	1637 (Two edns.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peter Ball ▪ Recorder of the City of Exeter 	0	1 (1637)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BA Oxon 1623 ▪ R <i>ante</i> 1637 ▪ PCr (1636)
13. Dunster, John (1581 or 82-1625 [Alum])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Caesars penny</i> [STC 7354] ▪ 1.Peter 2:13-14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 24 July 1610 ▪ Oxford 	1610	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bishop of London 	1 [attr.](1607-09)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Oxon 1605 ▪ Fel Oxon ▪ BC
14. Est, William 1546 or 47-1625	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'The judges, and juries instruction' ▪ John 7:51 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unknown 	1614 as part of <i>Two sermons</i> [STC 10539]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ William Hinson, esq. 	4 (1609-13) [prior to publication]	1 (1616)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matric Cantab 1559

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15. Fawkner, Antony (b.1601 or 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Nicodemus for Christ</i> [STC 10722] ▪ John 7:51 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 March 1627/8 ▪ Okeham (Rutland) 	1630 (2 nd edn. 1634)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moses Tryon Esquire 	3 [2 attr.] 1626-29	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Oxon 1623 ▪ GC (no date) ▪ R 1630 ▪ PCr (1626)
16. Fawkner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The pedigree of peace</i> [STC 10719] ▪ Leviticus 24:11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 September 1629 ▪ Uppingham (Rutland) ▪ [Intended for Oakham summer assizes, 1629] 	1630 (2 nd edn. 1634)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everard Fawkner ▪ Uncle & sheriff when sermon meant to be preached 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above
17. Fawkner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The widowes petition</i> [STC 10724] ▪ Luke 18:3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 25 July 1633 ▪ Northampton 	1635	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sir Lewis Watson ▪ Sheriff & Fawkner's patron 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above
18. Foster, Thomas (1591-1647)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The scourge of covetousnesse</i> [STC 11202] ▪ Phillipians 2:4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 July 1630 ▪ Exeter 	1631	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sir Thomas Richardson & Sir John Denham ▪ Assize judges 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Oxon 1614 ▪ V 1619

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19. Gamon, Hannibal (b. 1581 or 82)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Gods just desertion of the unjust</i> [STC 11546] ▪ Revelation 22:11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 July 1621 ▪ Launceston (Cornwall) 	1622	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	0	2 (1627-29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Oxon 1606 ▪ R 1619
20. Gamon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Gods smiting to amendment, or, revengement.</i> (1629) [STC 11547] ▪ Isaiah 1:5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 August 1628 ▪ Launceston 	1629	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jonathan Rashleigh esq. & his wife ▪ Gamon's 'kinsman' 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above
21. Garey, Samuel (1584 or 85-1646)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'A breake-fast for the bench' ▪ Psalms 2:10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1619 ▪ Thetford (Norfolk) 	1623 as part of <i>Jentaculum judicum</i> [STC 11598]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sir Thomas Holland & his wife ▪ Sheriff 	3 (1605-18)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LL.B Cantab 1606 ▪ R 1608 ▪ Preb 1620
22. Garey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'A manuell for magistrates' ▪ Deuteronomy 16:18-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1619 ▪ Norwich 	1623 as part of <i>Jentaculum judicum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above

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23. Gee, Edward (1565-1618)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The curse and crime of Meroz' Judges 5:23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Exeter 	1620 as part of <i>Two sermons</i> [STC 11700]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None [published posthumously] 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD Oxon 1616 (BD 1600) R 1599 Fel Oxon Canon 1616 RC 1617 Cou (1617, 1618)
24. Gray, Francis (d.1641 or 42 [Alum])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The judges scripture</i> (1636) [STC 12202] Psalms 2:10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 July 1635 Newcastle 	1636	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor & Aldermen of Newcastle Gray a preacher in the city 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1619 P 1622
25. Harris, Robert (1581-1658)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>S. Pauls confidence</i> [STC 12847] Acts 24:16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Oxford 	1628	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	7 (1610-27) [prior to publication]	15 (1628-54)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD Oxon 1648 (BD 1614) R 1607 PCr (1622)
26. Hausted, Peter (d.1645)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A sermon preached at the assises' Exodus 34:35: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Huntingdon 	1636 as part of <i>Ten sermons</i> [STC 12937]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection dedicated to Sir Christopher Hatton 	2 (1632-33) [prior to publication]	3 (1644-48)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1627 DD Oxon 1642 GC V 1640 [earlier R: date unknown]

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27. Hayes, William (b.1595 or 96)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The paragon of Persia</i> [STC 12973] Esther 1:15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 July 1624 Oxford 	1624	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Richard Gifford & his wife Patron 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Oxon 1627 R 1635
28. Hoskins, John (1579-1631)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A sermon preached before the judges' 1.Samuel 2:25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Hereford 	1615 as part of <i>Two sermons preached</i> [STC 13841]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert Bennet Bishop of Hereford. Hoskins his chaplain 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCL Oxon 1613 Fel Oxon R 1612 Preb 1612 BC & RC PCr (1614)
29. Hurste, Thomas (d.1680)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The descent of authoritie</i> (1637) [STC 14007] Genesis 9:6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 March 1636/7 Lincoln 	1637	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir William Savile, Bart. Patron 	0	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1620 DD Oxon 1631 R 1627 RC 1637 Cou (publ.1644)
30. Hutchins, Edward (1558?-1629)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A sermon preached at Westchester</i> [STC 14017] Canticles 2:15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 October 1586 Westchester (Cheshire) 	1586	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Thomas Egerton 	1 (1581)	5 (1589-1601)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Oxon 1581 Fel Oxon Preb 1589

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31. Macey, George Possibly b.1569 or 70 [<i>Alum</i>]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>A sermon preached at Charde</i> ▪ John 15:22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 March 1597/8 ▪ Charde (Somerset) 	1601	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possibly MA Oxon 1589 ('of Devon', <i>Alumni Oxon</i>, III, p.957)
32. Mayo, John (fl. 1607-29) Possibly b.1564 or 65 [<i>Alum</i>]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The universall principle</i> [STC 17756] ▪ Matthew 7:12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 23 July 1629 ▪ Dorchester 	1630	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Henry Hastings ▪ JP & Deputy Lieutenant 	2 (1591-1609)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possibly matric. Oxon 1583 ('of Dorset', <i>Alumni Oxon</i>, III, p.996)
33. Overton, William (1525?-1609)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>A godlye, and pithie exhortation</i>, [STC 18925] ▪ Romans 16:1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unknown ▪ East Grinstead (Sussex) 	1579	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	0	2 (visitation articles: 1584, 1601)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DD Oxon 1566 (BD 1566) ▪ R 1553 ▪ Canon 1559 ▪ B 1580 ▪ PCr (1566) ▪ Cou (1582)
34. Parsons, Bartholomew (1574-1642)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The magistrates charter examined</i> [STC 19349] ▪ Psalms 82:6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 9 March 1614/5 ▪ Sarum 	1616	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sir Henry Hobart & Sir Lawrence Tanfield ▪ Assize judges 	0	7 (1616-37)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BD Oxon 1611 ▪ R 1605 ▪ BC 1611

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35. Pecke, Richard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The great day dawning' James 5:9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lent 1632 Exeter 	1632 as part of <i>Two sermons</i> [STC 19522.5]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmund Arscot Sheriff. Pecke his chaplain 	0	1 (1635)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1624 V 1626
36. Pemberton, William (d.1622)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The charge of God and the king</i> [STC 19568] Deuteronomy 1:16-17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1615 or 1616 Hertford 	1619	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Francis Bacon 	1 (1613)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1576 BD Oxon 1583 Fel Cantab 1600 R 1584 PCr (1613)
37. Pestell, Thomas (1584?-1659?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The churles sicknesse</i> [STC 19790] Ecclesiastes 5:13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Leicester? 	1615	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Beaumont Patron 	0	5 (1615-60)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1609 R 1611 RC 1640 Vis (publ 1630) Cou (1640)
38. Pestell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The poore mans appeale</i> [STC 19791] Ecclesiastes 5:8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Leicester 	1620	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Henry Hobart Chancellor to Prince Charles 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above

A. Author	B. Short title & expository text	C. Date & place preached	D. Date published	E. Dedicatee. With notes of status or relationship to author	F. No. of works published before first published assize sermon preached	G. No. of works published after first published assize sermon preached	H. Notes on career & 'occasional' preaching
39. Ramsey, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'The politick reformation' ▪ Isaiah 1:26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 8 March 1629/30 ▪ Thetford 	1659 as part of <i>A summary of several sermons</i> [Wing R225]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collection dedicated to Ramsey's 'friend' James Dupont, BD, of Trinity College, Cambridge 	1 (1656)	1 (1661)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Cantab 1622 ▪ V 1629
40. Reeve, Thomas (1583 or 84-1651)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Moses old square for judges</i> [STC 29832] ▪ Deuteronomy 1:16-17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 17 July 1631 ▪ Norwich 	1632	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'To all the Honourable Judges of the Nation' 	2 (1624-29)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DD Cantab 1660 (BD 1624) ▪ R 1628
41. Reynolds, Edward (1599-1676)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The shieldes of the earth</i> [STC 20932] ▪ Psalms 47:9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 25 February 1634/5 ▪ Northampton 	1636	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	2 (1631-32)	46 (1637-89)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DD Oxon 1648 (MA 1624) ▪ R 1628 ▪ RC ▪ Canon 1660 ▪ B 1661 ▪ Vis (1637) ▪ PCr (1656) ▪ Cou (1668)

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42. Sanderson, Robert (1587-1663)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ad magistratum: The second sermon' in Sanderson, <i>Twenty sermons</i> Exodus 23:1-3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 March 1624/5 Lincoln 	1627 as part of <i>Ten sermons</i> [STC 21705] (Also in 9 further collections between 1632 and 1686)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Nicholas Sanderson [dedicatee of the 3 sermons <i>Ad Magistratum</i>] Patron 	3 (1615-24)	27 (1622-88)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1609 DD Oxon 1636 (BD 1617) Fel Oxon 1606 R 1618 Canon 1641 B 1660 Vis (2 publ. 1622; preached 1634, 1641) PCr (1624, 1627, 1632) Cou (1631-48)
43. Sanderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ad magistratum: The third sermon' Psalms 106:30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> August 1625 Lincoln 	1627 as part of <i>Ten sermons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above

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44. Sanderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ad magistratum: The first sermon' Proverbs 24:10-12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1630 Lincoln 	1656 as part of <i>Twenty sermons</i> [Wing S640] (Also in 12 further collections between 1657 & 1686)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
45. Sanderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ad magistratum: The second sermon' Proverbs 24:10-12 (cont.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1632 Lincoln 	1656 as part of <i>Twenty sermons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
46. Sanderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Ad magistratum: The second sermon' 1 Samuel 12:3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1634 Nottingham 	1656 as part of <i>Twenty sermons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
47. Sclater, William (1575-1626)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A sermon preached at the last generall assize</i> [STC 21843] Psalms 82:6-7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1616 Taunton (Somerset) 	1616	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Colles Sheriff 	5 (1610-12)	6 (1619-38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD Cantab 1617 (BD 1608) R 1604 Preb 1619 PCr (1609)

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48. Scott, Thomas (1580?-1626)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The projector</i> [STC 22081] Proverbs 14:34 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer 1620 Norwich 	1623 (in Holland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Cantab 1620 R (no date) RC 1616
49. Scott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The high-waies of God and the king</i> [STC 22102] Proverbs 14:12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1620 Thetford 	1623 (in Holland) [Published with a 2 nd sermon preached at Thetford]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	1 (1620)	20 (1621-42)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
50. Scot, Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Vox Dei: injustice cast and condemned</i> [STC 21873.5] Proverbs 17:15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 March 1622/3 Bury St Edmunds 	1623	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> William, Earl of Pembroke Patron 	0	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Cantab 1611 R 1612
51. Scot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>God and the king</i> [STC 21873] Ezra 7:26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 June 1631 Bury St Edmunds 	1633	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Thomas Jermyn Member of the privy council 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
52. Smith, Miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A learned and godly sermon</i> [STC 22807] Jeremiah 9:23-4: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Worcester 	1602	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By Robert Burhill to Gervase Babbington Bishop of Worcester 	0	1 (1632)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD Oxon 1594 (BD 1585) Canon 1580 V 1584 Fel Oxon 1610 B 1612

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53. Squire, John (c.1588-1653)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sermon preached at <i>Hartford</i> assizes [STC 23115.5] Exodus 20:16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 March 1616/17 Hertford 	1617 (2 nd edn. 1618 [STC 23116])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Newce Sheriff 	0	7 (1619-41)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1608 Fel Cantab 1606 V 1612
54. Stoneham, Mathew (1570 or 71-1636 or 37 [<i>Alum</i>])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The first sermon' Ezra 7:26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 1606 & 1608 [when Coke on this circuit] Norwich 	1608 as part of <i>Two sermons of direction for judges and magistrates</i> [STC 23290]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Edward Coke Assize judge 	0	1 (1610)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1595 V 1602
55. Stoneham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The second sermon' 2 Chronicles 19:5-6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Norwich? 	1608 as part of <i>Two sermons of direction for judges and magistrates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
56. Sutton, Thomas (1585-1623)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Jethroes counsell to Moses</i> [STC 23505] Exodus 18:21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 March 1621/2 Southwark 	1631	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By printer, William Jone, to Robert Duce Lord Mayor of London 	2 (1613-15)	3 (1624-32) [all posthumous]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD Oxon 1620 (BD 1616) Fel Oxon P (no dates) PCr (1613, 1616)

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57. Taylor, Theophilus (d.1640)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The mappe of Moses: or, a guide for governours.</i> [STC 23819] Hebrews 3:5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown Reading 2 sermons amalgamated into 1 text 	1629	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir John Mounson, Knight of the Bath 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA Cantab 1613 R 1617
58. Taylor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hebrews 3:5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
59. Wakeman, Robert (1575 or 76-1629)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The judges charge</i> [STC 24950] 2.Chronicles 19:6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date & place Unknown 	[1610]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	4 (1603-07) [prior to publication]	2 (1612-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD 1608 (BD 1605) Fel Oxon 1596 R 1603 Canon 1616 PCr (1602) Cou (1605)
60. Ward, Samuel (1577-1640)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Jethro's justice of peace</i> [STC 25048.5] Exodus 18:21-3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bury St Edmunds Unknown 	1618 (Further edns. in 1621, 1623, 1627)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By Nathaniel Ward, Samuel's brother, to Sir Francis Bacon 	2 (1615-17) [prior to publication]	10 (1618-80)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD Cantab 1607 P 1603 PCr (1616)

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64. Worship, William	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Earth raining upon heaven</i> [STC 25994] ▪ Luke 7:37-38 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 August 1614 ▪ Nottingham 	1614	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John Hall ▪ Worship's 'friend' 	2 (1603-12)	3 (1615-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DD Cantab 1613 (BD 1606) ▪ V 1600 ▪ Vis (publ.1625) ▪ PCr (1616)
65. Younger, William (b.1572 or 73)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Judah's penance</i> [STC 26096] ▪ Genesis 38:26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 March 1616/17 ▪ Thetford 	1617 (2 nd edn. also in 1617))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	1 (1600)	1 (1621)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA Cantab 1600 ▪ R 1612

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19116	Pedigrees of the Families of Suffolk
21610	Devon Poor Rate Accounts, 1642, 1648
22173	Farway Manor Accounts and Papers, 1544-1682
34324	Caesar Papers
34395	Miscellaneous Collections, including Prayers and Theological Observations, C17th
39245	Wodehouse Papers
48106	Yelverton Papers
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AWC 11/39	Copies of Cox Family Wills

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E 14/4/1	Little Thurlow Glebe Terrier, 1613
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FL 501/11	Dispute over Clare Common Pasture, 1609-10
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FL 547/4/1	Cavenham Parish Registers, 1539-1813
FL 639/11/1	Copy of Sir Stephen Soame's will, 1617
HA 540	Miscellaneous Deeds
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